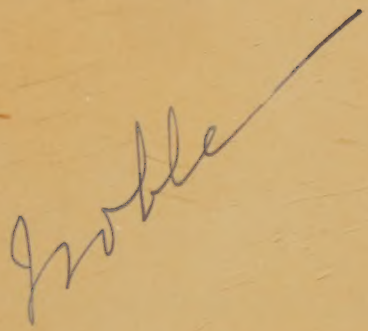

THE EDUCATION OF ANTHONY DARE

By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

The House of Merrilees
Richard Baldock
Exton Manor
The Squire's Daughter
The Eldest Son
The Honour of the Clintons
The Greatest of These
The Old Order Changeth
Watermeads
Upsidonia
Abington Abbey
The Graftons
The Clintons, and Others
Sir Harry
Many Junes
A Spring Walk in Provence
Peggy in Toyland
The Hall and the Grange
Peter Binney
Big Peter
Pippin
The Clinton Twins
Anthony Dare
The Education of Anthony Dare

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BY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

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THE EDUCATION OF ANTHONY DARE

CHAPTER I

A CLERK IN THE CITY

Anthony Dare was a clerk in the City. He had heard himself so described.

"Who's that?"

"I don't know his name, but he's a clerk in the City."

Of course the speaker—or one of them—knew perfectly well who he was, and had meant to be offensive. It was Willows who had said it. Tony had taken a dislike to him at school, nearly three years before, when Willows had first appeared there, a slack-limbed youth of fifteen, with a perpetual smirk of self-satisfaction upon a face that he instinctively disliked. Boys who came to school at that age had no right to be self-satisfied, and Tony had made it his business to teach Willows that lesson, conferring a benefit upon him, if he had only known it; for Willows had subsided into the ruck, to await the time when he should have done something to justify the expression of hauteur into which his countenance seemed naturally to fall.

During the two years that had elapsed since Tony had left school, Willows had become a "swell." He was well

up in the Sixth, and one of the best bowlers in the Eleven. And he cultivated an air, in exactly the same way as Tony would have done himself if he had stayed at school long enough to reach the higher altitudes of swelldom. Part of the technique was to stroll up to morning school in a leisurely, almost lazy, fashion, which was how Tony, on his way to the station, had passed him and given him greeting.

"Hullo, Willows! Feel like bowling 'em out this afternoon?"

What could have been more pleasant and friendly, from an Old Hilburian, well known in his time, and still intimate with many of his contemporaries who had stayed on? It was possible that Willows's companion, who was younger, and wore only Third Eleven colours, which were all that Tony had worn himself, did not know who he was. His question had not been asked as if with the intention of being overheard. But Willows, strolling along in lordly fashion with his books under his arm, who had not replied to the greeting, except by a stare, had replied to the question in a clear and carrying voice, and in the words reported. Evidently he had borne a grudge, and had been bearing it for three years.

Well, perhaps he couldn't be blamed, though Tony had long since forgiven him for his original offence of being a cocky young scug, and thought he would have done well to forget it himself. But the description of him pricked his self-esteem, and when he had invented the devastating reply with which he might have confounded Willows, if he had thought of it in time, the phrase still echoed disagreeably in his ears.

A clerk in the City! That was exactly what he was, though in the business which his half-brother had inherited from their father, and some day to become a partner in it himself. There was nothing derogatory in that, and yet he felt himself, after two years of it, in an inferior position to Willows, and still more to those of his own age who were in their last term at school, and going on to Oxford or Cambridge after the approaching blissful vacation. For nearly all those who stayed on for the full time were going to one or other of the Universities.

Tony had left at seventeen, not sorry to do so at the time, for it had seemed to him an emancipation to be freed from the rule of school, to have his time to himself when his work was done, and to be earning money. But now the advantages seemed to be reversed. School work, especially in the Sixth, would have been far more interesting than work in the City, in which he took no interest whatever. It was true that he had his evenings to himself, but that was a poor exchange for the three and a half months of holiday that he would have enjoyed if he had been still a schoolboy. His brother Henry had been fairly generous with holidays, but three weeks in the summer and a day or two now and then hardly sufficed to remove the impression of being tied and bound to the hated grind throughout the year. As for having money to spend, he was always desperately hard up towards the end of the month, and already owed for a considerable tailor's bill; for he liked to be well-dressed, and had eagerly leapt at the opportunity of buying clothes on credit, when he had first realized that he could get it from his father's tailor. The debt darkened his days. He had been far

better off as a schoolboy, with regular pocket money and occasional tips. If he had had money he had spent it; if not, he had done without. Now he had to provide for his clothes, for his lunches, for his holidays and amusements, and there was never enough.

The discontent aroused by the impertinence of Willows was not lessened by his meeting with Stephen Hawthorne immediately afterwards, though Stephen remained his chief friend, and he often came round by this longer way to the station for the sake of a word or two with him on his way to school.

Willows was of the School House, Stephen of Allenby Lodge, the Housemaster of which, Mr. Broadbent, had married his mother two years before. As Tony walked up the road he kept his eye upon the stream of boys hurrying out of the cross-road in which Allenby Lodge lay, for he did not wish to linger about for Stephen, or Willows might pass him again and give vent to further opprobrious utterances. But Stephen came out just in the nick of time, and he was spared that indignity.

Tony and Stephen were of the same age—nearly nineteen—and about the same height—just short of six feet. Tony was good-looking, with regular features and thick wavy hair, which by means of cosmetics he tamed to a conventional smoothness. He had a friendly alert expression, and his smile came readily; but when he was alone his face was sometimes moody. He was not, however, of an age at which occasional fits of discontent could have marked him, and the general impression he made was of a young man who took a pleasure in life and had a liking for his fellows. He was well-dressed, in the habit of the

time, his silk hat shining, his collar of a somewhat exaggerated height, his cut-away coat tightly buttoned, his trousers fitting close to the leg. He carried his gloves and a neatly furled umbrella. If Willows had not wanted to get back at him, it would not have occurred to him to use the words "a clerk in the City." Willows did not present nearly such a figure himself when he wore the same sort of clothes on Sundays and occasions of state.

Stephen Hawthorne's was a clumsier figure, and he could have been put down as one who took no interest in clothes at any time. Yet in his worn grey jacket suit and straw hat he was dressed more as Tony would have liked to be than he was himself. The straw hat was adorned with the colours of the Second Eleven, and Tony had not so disentangled himself from school standards as to be unimpressed by the dignity thus indicated. The colours, indeed, recently acquired, had not yet ceased to surprise him. Stephen had never seemed to have any cricket aptitude at all, though he had played regularly. But he had crept up slowly to the position of an all-round reliable player, and this was his reward. Good old Stephen! One of the best! and a faithful affectionate friend, as Tony rejoiced to consider him. Certainly he did not grudge him his good fortune; but he could hardly help comparing his career so far with that of Anthony Dare, who was so much more brilliant in every way. If he had stayed on at school of course he would have been in the First Eleven by this time. And Stephen had come on in work too, in which Tony had never had any difficulty in beating him—when he had tried. He had actually gained a Scholarship at Cambridge, partly by luck, for

it was a close Scholarship, connected with the County from which his father had come, but also by sheer plodding. Perhaps he could not have gained an open Scholarship, but he had beaten others who had entered for this one. Here he was, at nearly nineteen, already a man of mark in the little world of school, and about to enter the world to which of all others Tony would have liked to belong. What had he himself arrived at, in comparison with the friend whom he had been wont to look upon with patronizing good will? He was nobody as yet—a clerk in the City.

Stephen waited for him to come up. "It's all right," he grinned at him. "I've got leave."

"Good business!" said Tony. "It will only be five weeks from Saturday. I can't tell you how I'm looking forward to it."

Three years before Tony had had a few days' sailing on the Norfolk rivers and Broads, and now he had arranged for a party, to take a wherry for a week. Stephen had had to ask permission from his mother and stepfather to join it.

"He was jolly decent about it," he said, referring to Mr. Broadbent. "He told me that from the beginning of the holidays I was to consider myself on my own. I can go where I like as long as I save the money to pay for myself. But he's going to give me a fiver for the Broads. Jolly decent of him! I say, old chap, I wish you'd go halves in it. You know I've got money saved up. I was going to pay for myself. It won't cost much more than five pounds between us."

Tony refused this kindly offer, and Stephen hadn't

time to press it, for it was only a walk of two minutes or so to the school. It depressed Tony still further, as he went on by himself, to reflect that Stephen was better off than himself even in respect of money. The tips that had come his way during his schooldays had been saved up, partly through parental compulsion, but also because he was of a careful disposition. He had quite a nice little sum in the savings bank, from which he was now apparently to be allowed to draw. And whatever he did draw would be for something worth having, not to squander, as Tony had squandered the far greater sums that had come to him from time to time. He never could keep money in his pocket. He didn't know now where the few pounds were coming from for his holiday. But it would be a shame to sponge on old Stephen. Perhaps Laura, his sister-in-law, would help him. She could be worked on, on occasions. He couldn't ask Henry, because some months before he had paid up some debts for him, on the understanding that he didn't get into debt again; and he had got into debt again, though he hadn't meant to.

The background of discontent was always present with him, but it was tempered by the inexhaustible expectation of something to come that would change the aspect of his life altogether; and in the meantime there were innumerable things to take pleasure and interest in, even though he was condemned to spend the greater part of his days in an uncongenial occupation in uncongenial surroundings. Hilbury, in the summer, held out attractive prospects, and the long evenings, and the Sundays, and the Saturday half-holidays, gave him plenty of opportunity for taking part in whatever went on there. This was

Mrs. Clitheroe's day for receiving all sorts of young people to tennis and supper. She was a new-comer to Hilbury—a well-to-do widow, who spent much of her time and a great part of her income in good works in the East End of London. She used her large house in Hilbury, with its three or four acres of garden, as a sort of home of rest and recreation for her fellow-workers and protégés. The company was apt to be mixed. You might meet earnest scions of noble houses there, but you were just as likely to meet a party of dockers' wives. You were always sure of meeting a few clergy, of the high ritualistic persuasion. Mrs. Clitheroe was looked at a little askance by some of the old-established people in Hilbury, for in those days party feeling was apt to run high in church matters. But Laura Dare had lately identified herself with advanced ritualism, and was one of Mrs. Clitheroe's champions; so Tony had become an early participant in whatever amusements she provided for her friends, and found her parties more interesting than others, because of meeting new people at them.

The greater part of his spare time was taken up with the sociabilities that came his way, especially in the summer time; but he had pursuits that engaged many of his thoughts besides. At this time he was immensely keen on painting. He had got up at half past five that morning and walked a mile to the Common that bordered Hilbury to paint a picture. His skill was not equal to his desire, and he had suffered disappointment in his performance; but the expedition had given him delight. He loved those early morning hours, when he had the beauty of the world to himself, and was dissatisfied when he had

slept on and failed to take advantage of them. He thought mostly of the picture he had tried to paint as he walked on to the station. He would try it again the next morning if the fine weather held, sponge it all out perhaps, and begin again in another way. He meant to do a lot of painting during his week on the Broads, and afterwards when he spent the rest of his all too short holiday with his aunt at St. Leonards. If only he could have more time for it, and a few lessons, he was sure he would make quick progress. He envied the lucky people who could give themselves up to it, going about the world in search of beauty, and spending their days in work that was better than any play.

The daily meeting at the station, and the half hour's journey into the City, provided a form of sociability which was one of the few things that Tony found agreeable in the circumstances of his work. The train by which he travelled was the one most taken by the younger of the business men who lived at Hilbury, the principals travelling by a later one, which enabled them to reach their offices in leisurely dignity shortly before ten o'clock. There were usually enough of Tony's friends to fill a carriage, and they were very busy with door and window-strap in keeping out those who were inclined to invade them as the train filled up at successive stations.

As a rule there were some talk and chaff at first, and then they settled down to the perusal of newspapers, and some of books. Tony was one of the readers of books, having discovered that he wasn't really interested in politics. He had lately joined a reading Society, and bound himself under penalty of a fine to read some substantial

work for an hour every day. The fines were pooled, and provided prizes for those who had fulfilled their obligations with most regularity at the end of the half year. In neither of the periods since he had joined had he come near to winning a prize, but he had got through nearly a month of the present one without missing his hour a day. He was reading "Modern Painters," and revelling in it. Ruskin spoke to him with an inspired voice, and was opening up to him a whole new world of beauty and endeavour, none of which, unfortunately, touched the world in which he spent most of his days. He had never read a book like this before, and was in a state of mind in which fiction, to which he had hitherto devoted most of his reading, seemed a futile waste of time, for the reader if not for the writer of it.

Tony was apt to be chaffed about his hour's reading by his travelling companions, who took pleasure in beguiling him from it, so that he could seldom secure the uninterrupted quarter of an hour which was the minimum contribution permitted to the daily total. This morning he did not attempt it, for three of his fellow-travellers were to be of the Broads party, and spent most of the time in discussing it.

One of them was a young man whom Tony was inclined to think of as his most intimate friend, always excepting Stephen Hawthorne, from whom he was now somewhat cut off. Herbert Duncombe was about the same age as himself, the son of a country parson, and beginning his work in a bank. He had taken lodgings in Hilbury in the previous Autumn, and Tony had got to know him

at the Choral Society. He was well educated, and, like Tony himself, seemed to have his chief interests elsewhere than in the calling to which he had committed himself. But unlike Tony, he was fairly contented with his lot. He had a small allowance from his father, and with that and the exiguous salary upon which the bank that he served started its servants, he was able to live in tolerable freedom and comfort, though not without exercising a rigid economy. He was the only one of his friends whom Tony had been able to persuade to join his reading Society, and he had been one of the prize-winners in his first half-year, having missed none of the appointed hours. He was reading Macaulay's History, and if he chose to read it in the train in the morning he read it, and there was no disturbing of him.

Duncombe had been at Winchester, and had the quiet good manners that distinguish the sons of that ancient college. He had not particularly distinguished himself either in school work or at games. As far as could yet be seen there was nothing in which he had it in him particularly to distinguish himself. He was the average well-ordered, well-mannered young man of good parentage and education who takes his share of such of the work of the world as is open to him and keeps his place in the rank to which he has been born. But he had character and self-possession, and his mind was open to intellectual interests. Tony greatly respected him. It was one of the saving points in his own embracing predilections that he preferred for his friends men of stable character and pursuits. He thought himself superior to Duncombe in gen-

eral capacity, as he probably was, but deferred to him in matters of conduct and behaviour, in which Duncombe was a strict upholder of his code.

The rest of the little party which met on most mornings of the week, and most of them at times elsewhere, was made up of elements which greatly varied, although to outward appearance there was little difference between them. All but one of them, who was a medical student, wore the tall hat and tail coat which was the recognized City dress of that time. The oldest was not more than four and twenty. All had their way to make, but for some the way was well prepared, while others would depend upon their own exertions whether they advanced to commercial eminence or remained in the ranks of clerkdom. They never talked about their work, and it would have been difficult to pick out one of them who took more interest in it than Tony did in his. But probably most of them would make good in the paths laid down for them, and there were some who would do more. It might be said that the time had not come for any of them to exercise the ingenuity and resource demanded by the higher necessities of commercial competition. They were learning their job, with plenty of time to take over it, and for the time being the pursuits of youth were more important than the work by which their future was to be supported.

There was one of them who was, even to the outward eye, a little different from the rest. His name was Hatch —E. P. Hatch—and he was never called by his Christian name, as most of the rest were by each other. He had been at Hilbury School with Tony, and gone up it as quickly as anybody, until he had left at a little over

sixteen, in mid-career, and gone into the City. He had been considered "an awful little cad" at school, but no amount of snubbing, or even personal violence, had subdued his cockney spirit. He would push himself in anywhere, and it was impossible to shake him off. Tony rather liked him, because he had a vein of cheerful humour, but Duncombe found it impossible to adapt his standards to include such a person, and regularly cold-shouldered him.

Hatch was the son of a clerk who would never be more than a clerk. He had been admitted to the school, on a Foundation Scholarship, because he was so clever that he seemed likely to do it credit. He could certainly have trodden a scholastic path with success, at least as far as the University, and he had told Tony that the Headmaster had remonstrated with his father for taking him away from school so early. "But it wasn't him; it was me," said Hatch with his wide-mouthed grin. "I told the old geezer I wanted to make money."

"Who do you mean by the old geezer?" asked Tony. "Your governor or the Head?"

"Oh, the Head, of course. You should have seen his face when he told me I might do as well as Pritchard, and I said I was going to do much better."

Pritchard had been head boy of the school when Tony first entered it, and had proceeded from a Balliol Scholarship to a double First and a Fellowship at All Souls'.

"Fancy me a stuffy old Oxford don!" said Hatch. "No, thank you. Not good enough for E. P. H."

Hatch had been in the City for four years, and had held clerkships in about as many different firms, of various

interests. Tony saw no more in it than a series of rows with his principals, which Hatch could make amusing enough when he recounted them, and a sort of rolling-stone career which might or might not lead to something good in time. Hatch was now in a wholesale ironmonger's, whose warehouse was not far from the office in which Tony worked. He was in the clerical department, but could sometimes be seen in the warehouse itself, with his coat off; and the clothes he wore were not always free from grease. He seemed to be miles away from what was represented by Duncombe, and Tony was not without qualms on account of his friendship with him. For some time they had been accustomed to meet at eleven o'clock in an underground "Mecca," for a cup of coffee and a game of dominoes. Tony's work was not arduous, and he could always make time for such diversions. Hatch seemed to be in the same position, but hurried back to his work while Tony strolled to his.

Hatch was earning little more money than when he started. Tony told him that he never would, if he kept changing from one business to another; but he laughed at him, and said there was plenty of time. He never seemed to read a book. As for his classical education, in which he had advanced far enough to be distinguished for writing Greek prose of a commendable quality, it seemed to have had no effect upon him whatever. He told Tony that he had not read a word of Latin or Greek since he had left school, and laughed at the idea of wanting to do so. It seemed extraordinary that he should ever have had any capacity in classical studies, with so little taste for them, but he would probaby have done equally

well in science, if the school had laid itself out for education on those lines. He had a keen searching brain, but seemed to have made small use of it so far. If his ambition was to excel in money-making, as he declared it to be, he was a long time beginning to make money. But like the rest of them his inclination seemed to be to have as good a time as possible outside his hours of work. That he appeared to enjoy those hours as much as any was the obvious point of difference in him. But he so far conferred to the code as not to talk about them, except to make stories for Tony's amusement.

CHAPTER II

THE OFFICE

It was Hatch with whom Tony walked from the station to the office. That their ways were the same accounted for the familiarity that had lately grown up between them, to which Duncombe was so inclined to take exception. Tony was perhaps even more than Duncombe inclined to shun departures from the recognized standards of gentility, not having behind him the consciousness of membership of a great school, and more liable to be identified with those with whom he might make friends. He would not have acknowedged a close friendship with Hatch, but he was tending that way, for Hatch evidently liked him, and he was constitutionally incapable of accepting liking without returning it. His defence to Duncombe was that Hatch was very amusing in his cockney way, but he was getting rather ashamed of offering it. There was more than that in Hatch. He had a warm heart, and was ready to throw some of its warmth over Tony, who had a warm heart himself, though prejudices might prevent him from giving it free play at this stage of his life.

"I suppose you haven't got room for another little one in your old wherry," said Hatch, as they left the station. "If you have, I might come after all."

Hatch had never been invited to join the party, and would not have been accepted by the majority of them.

But he never seemed to know when he was or was not welcome.

"No, we're full up," said Tony. "But I thought you weren't going to take your holiday until later."

"I wasn't. But I'm thinking of chucking this job, and if I do, I can chuck it at any time. Or at least, I shall."

Tony laughed at him. "When *are* you going to settle down?" he asked.

"Oh, plenty of time for that. I'm not exactly dying to settle down at my time of life. They're sending a fellow to travel France and Germany, and it made me think that that was just the sort of job I should like myself, if I knew their blooming lingoes. And that put it into my head that I'd better learn them. So that's what I'm thinking of doing for the next few months."

"Better go back to school," suggested Tony.

"Why on earth can't they teach us something that would be of use to us at school? Fancy spending all that time learning Greek and Latin! If it had been French and German now! I could have taken on this job at once, without having to waste time sitting down to that sort of grind again."

Tony knew the answer to that, but refrained from advancing it. "You'll be able to learn them all the more easily because of what you do know," he said. "How are you going to set about it?"

"Oh, I shall learn them easily enough if I do take it on. I'm a clever boy, you know; even the old Head acknowledges that. I'm thinking of going to Switzerland, where they talk 'em both."

"That's a bright idea," said Tony. "But you don't get the right French accent in Switzerland, do you?"

"What do I care about the right accent? If I can talk to them so as they can understand me that's all I want. I think I shall do it. I'm getting tired of coming in and out of this blooming place every day. I'll back myself to be able to talk both languages in three months, well enough, anyhow, to take on any job of this sort that's going. I can pick up the rest as I'm going on."

"You won't be making anything while you're learning."

"Oh, I've got a few beans put by, and the governor can fork out a few more if I want 'em. I didn't cost him anything for schooling, and he owes me a year of it anyhow. Besides, if I like it over there I can take on a job. I shan't starve; don't you worry about that. And I shall get some fun out of it too."

"I should think you would. I wish to goodness I could go abroad. I hate this as much as you do."

"Well, why don't you? Let's go together."

"Oh, how can I? I'm stuck down here for the rest of my life."

"I'm hanged if I'd let myself be stuck down anywhere, unless I wanted to be. Still, I suppose you'd be a fool to chuck the chances you've got. I shouldn't. I should stick to it, and stir 'em up—get my fun out of that."

This faintly amused Tony, for whatever stirring up was done in the office of Dare & Son was apt to be done upon him. He did not suppose either that Hatch, if he were in his place, would do anything but make himself a nuisance and get into trouble for it, as had happened in his former employments. Tony was unable to imagine

any one of their age really interesting himself in business to the extent of wanting to make it on his own account. It was a different matter to be so sure of yourself that you could go anywhere in the world you liked and have no fears of making enough to live on if you found you hadn't enough. It was the sense of freedom to seek new scenes that he envied in Hatch, and he would willingly have exchanged his own supposed security in the future for the same amount of freedom in the present. But he was already, if he had known it, involved in the entanglements of life as he had learnt it. He might think himself ready to take his safety in his hands and adventure himself in unknown, and therefore desirable surroundings; but however much he might grumble at the confinement and dulness of his life, it was actually well-supported and well-endowed, and he could not do without the props that he had in it.

The weather was unusually hot, even for mid-July, and the office was refreshingly cool and quiet after the glare of the noisy streets. There was usually a deceptive sense of leisure about it on Tony's arrival. Mr. Richards came a few minutes before him, but the serious work of the day did not begin until Henry arrived and went through the letters. Mr. Richards did a great deal of work in a methodical way, but was not disinclined for occasional conversation when circumstances permitted of it. He liked Tony, whom he had known since his childhood. He must have known by this time that he took little interest in his work, and indeed there had been times when he had had to take notice of some carelessness or omission on his part. But he never complained to Henry about him, as

he did sometimes of the boys who passed in succession through the office. Perhaps he may have thought that he himself was the person to whom expectations of a partnership should have been held out, and was not overanxious about Tony's making good. He put no more responsibility on him than he could help, and made no comments upon the long absences he allowed himself, when he was supposed to be going round among other offices, but was usually doing something else. Mr. Richards had married somewhat late in life, and had two small children who were the apple of his eye. Tony had visited him in his home, where he was highly appreciated. There was always something to talk about with Mr. Richards, when he was inclined to talk.

Benson, the shipping clerk, who had come to Tony's father over twenty years before, and remained with the firm ever since, was friendly too in a different way. He had brought up a considerable family on his small salary, living in one of the spreading suburbs to the East of London, where he cultivated a garden and a dog, and played quoits. He was the son of a small Somersetshire farmer, and had probably come to London in the first instance with the idea of making his fortune. He had not made it and never would, but he was an honest upright man, content with his little. After many years of London life he still spoke with a slight burr, and there was a flavour of the countryman about him. When Tony accompanied him on his visits to the Docks they talked about the country, and the staid respectable clerk would tell tales of boyish poachings of his lordship's rabbits, and of glorious truancies to follow hounds on foot. He

would always end up by saying that a country life was best of all; but he had become a thorough Londoner, and all his sons were working at trades, or as clerks.

The office was one of those where the work was done by a small staff, which was certainly not overworked. The only other member of it was the office boy, who usually came at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and proceeded to a clerkship in some other firm a year or two later. The present one—Petherick—was a protégé of Mrs. Clitheroe's, whom Laura had asked Henry to take in. He had been a choir boy in the East End church in which Mrs. Clitheroe was interested, and had been made a pet of because of his seraphic expression and the fervent interest he had shown in ritualistic devices. Tony had rather taken to him at first. He was well-mannered and keen on games, which were elaborately run in his parish. Tony had gone down once to play cricket there, and had found that Petherick wasn't particularly liked by his fellows. By that time he had become rather tired of him himself. Petherick had taken it for granted at first that he was one of the young men of whom he had experience whose interests were in ritualism, and played up to him under that supposition. When he had found that Tony was unimpressed, and even a little hostile, he had changed his tune, and had shown himself using his acquirements more for his temporal than for his spiritual advancement. He was careless in his work, and took no interest in it. Tony could hardly reproach him on that account, but he preferred to keep him at a distance, which was not difficult with the difference in their respective positions.

Mr. Richards was sitting on his high stool opening the

letters and preparing them for Henry's perusal. He was in his shirt sleeves, but would put on his alpaca office jacket before Henry came in. Benson, seated on another high stool at another desk, was preparing for his morning visit to the Docks, making notes in his crabbed writing, his high hat on the back of his head, his spectacles on the point of his nose. Petherick was bringing ledgers from the big safe at the back of the office and putting them upon the brass rails above Mr. Richards's desk. It struck Tony that he was rather a dissipated-looking youth, with his lank yellow hair and his pale face. It was the first time that the impression had come to him, and it was fleeting, for he had his mind upon something else.

He had left the office before four o'clock on the previous afternoon, meaning to come back. But he had found it convenient not to come back, and had run the risk of nothing turning up for him to attend to. Henry, who spent little time in the office in the afternoon, had not noticed his absence, or he would certainly have spoken about it. Would Mr. Richards have anything to say?

Mr. Richards gave him a cheerful good morning, and after Tony had changed his coat, and folded some paper guards for his shirt-cuffs, he approached him with what might be considered as a peace-offering. He had spent a week-end with Mr. Richards shortly before, and amused the two children with a fairy story, which he had made up and illustrated as he went along. He had promised to write it in a little book, with more pictures, and had somewhat delayed over it. But now it was finished.

"Here's the book at last for John and Dorothy," he

said. "I haven't had time to make it as long as I wanted to, but I'll do them another one sometime or other."

Mr. Richards allowed himself to be interested in the pictures, and Benson came and looked over his shoulder and expressed admiration of Tony's skill. Petherick also gave interested glances at it as he passed to and fro, but was not invited to join in the inspection. Mr. Richards, who was an adept at various small arts and crafts, suggested improvements in the binding, and seemed inclined to lay hands on the office paste for the purpose then and there. But as Henry's arrival was imminent, he put the book away in the drawer of his desk, and the business air resumed itself.

"Handsworth's came round about that shipment of rails yesterday afternoon," Mr. Richards said. "I said you'd call in and see them. But you didn't come back."

He paused a moment, as if awaiting an explanation, but Tony gave him none, and he entered into particulars of the question that had been raised, from which Tony gathered with growing dismay that his lapse might have serious consequences. Mr. Richards did not speak in a tone of authority, and indeed was almost apologetic, but he said: "I could have settled it, but—er—I told them you would come round. I think you had better go and see to it at once."

Tony put on his coat again and went out, a prey to lively misgivings. He knew—and was not certain whether Mr. Richards did or not—that the question might involve the holding up of an important shipment, which he had thought settled for a certain steamer. It could have been settled in a few words the day before. Was it too late

now? He knew that for reasons of their own Handsworth's would be glad to get out of this particular obligation, which he had taken some pride in fixing upon them.

His fears were confirmed when he went into the big shipping office, where a battalion of clerks, seated at rows of high desks, and the constant coming and going at various counters, presented a scene of busy activity very different from the subdued air of the office at Dare & Son. The head of the department with which he had to do was for making short work of him. "If it wasn't worth your while to come and put it straight last night," he said, "we weren't going to hold it over. We can use the space over and over again, and that's what we are going to do. We only took the stuff as a favour to you in the first instance."

This wasn't quite true, but it was of no use arguing it. Tony used his utmost powers of persuasion, disguising his hostility to a man whom he disliked at all times. But the other had his advantage, and meant to keep it. At last Tony said that he must see his principal. "Oh, he won't say anything different," said the clerk. "I put it up to him yesterday, and he said we were to refuse the stuff."

Tony doubted whether this was so. He thought that if he could see Mr. Handsworth, who had been a business friend of his father's and had taken some small notice of him, he might be able to persuade him to put matters right. But the difficulty was to get at him, in time to do anything. If he was in the office he was opening his letters now, and a junior clerk, such as Tony, wouldn't be able to gain admittance for another half hour at least.

It was no good kicking his heels in the outer office, and he decided to go back and report matters to Henry.

This was a disagreeable necessity, but the affair was too serious to play with any further. Henry could get at Mr. Handsworth, if he couldn't himself, and his powers of persuasion would be greater than Tony's.

There was an almost complete severance between Henry as Tony dealt with him at home, and Henry as his business chief. Outside the office they were fairly good friends. Tony had adapted himself to life with Henry and Laura, and though their ways were not always the same as his he had the satisfaction of knowing that they liked to have him living with them. Some of his interests were Henry's too, and they either deferred to or differed from one another upon them in the same way as if they had been sons together in their father's house. Laura sometimes sided with Henry, sometimes with Tony. Considering that he was entirely dependent upon his brother, who was so much older than he, and lived at his charges, Tony was freer of control than he might have expected to be, and was not without consciousness of it, putting it down to Henry's credit in moments of irritation with him.

But Henry in the City was a very different person. He was immersing himself more and more in his business occupations, and had acquired the confidence of a man of affairs, and also the authoritative, not to say dictatorial, air towards his subordinates which went with it. There had been a change in his attitude even towards Mr. Richards, who had been head clerk to his father when he had first come into the office. He was sometimes impatient with the slow understanding of Benson, who had

also been in his present position when Henry was a boy. Towards Tony he was sharp and businesslike, and there was an undercurrent of impatience towards him too, not on account of his understanding, which was quick enough, but because, after two years in the office, there was little for which he could rely upon him. This had only once been mentioned between them, when Tony had had to go to his brother about his debts, and Henry had taken the opportunity of talking to him about the lack of interest he showed in his work. Tony had been rather ashamed of himself then, and had promised amendment, almost as if he had been rebuked by a schoolmaster; and Henry had said nothing more. But Tony knew that his dissatisfaction with him had not decreased. Probably this affair would bring it to a head again.

But he had to face it. He went straight into Henry's room, where he was sitting at his desk, with Mr. Richards at his elbow, going through his letters. Henry frowned at the intrusion, and his frown did not grow lighter when Tony told him what had happened. "I thought it was all fixed up," he said. "But they came in after I had left yesterday with these questions, and now they say that because I wasn't here to answer them they won't take the stuff at all."

Henry's annoyed questions elicited the fact that Tony had left the office before four o'clock, and he began to express himself forcibly about it. But Tony said: "I know I ought not to have done it, but it's no use wasting time over that now. I thought that if you would go to Mr. Handsworth at once you might be able to get it put right. I don't believe they have actually made any other arrange-

ments yet, whatever Johnson says. But they will, unless we stop them in time."

Henry seized his hat and told Tony to come with him. The office of Handsworth & Co. was only a little way down the street, and as they went to it he got from Tony a full account of the details of the shipment and the question in dispute. There was no time to talk about anything else, but Tony understood that his displeasure was only in abeyance. Henry sent him back when they arrived at the shipping office. "I shall send my name straight up to Handsworth," he said. "I shan't go near Johnson, and you had better not be seen."

So Tony went back, and waited for an uncomfortable half hour. The office was a scene of peace almost unbelievable in these bustling days. Benson had departed for the Docks, Mr. Richards, with the morning's mail held up until Henry's return, was occupied with his ledgers, Petherick was docketing and pigeonholing letters. The telephone was then in its incompetent infancy, and there was none in the office of Dare & Son. A few people came in on small matters of business, and went out again. The office, at the back of the building, was as quiet as if it were a mile away from the traffic of the street, instead of only a few yards.

By and by Henry's unmistakable step, with its slight limp, could be heard echoing along the stone passage. He passed straight through the outer office to his room, saying to Tony: "They'll take the shipment. Go and see about it."

CHAPTER III

BUSINESS

Tony felt the necessity of stringing himself up for the coming discussion with Henry, and the strain of weakness in his nature impelled him to take counsel with somebody about it. He would be lunching with Duncombe, but somehow he didn't expect much sympathy from Duncombe, who would see in his lapse only something that couldn't have occurred to himself, and something to be avoided in the future. Hatch, whom he thought of as somebody in constant revolt against his employers, would not take that view exactly, and it would be interesting to see what view he did take, and what advice he would give.

But to meet Hatch meant repeating on a small scale the truancy of the day before, the result of which had nearly proved so disastrous, and he was sufficiently sobered by his escape to feel disinclined for such a repetition. However, by the time eleven o'clock came round, and Henry had gone out to attend a Board Meeting, he was ready to pursue his usual routine. There were a few offices he had to visit, and after that there would be very little more for him to do before lunch time. He made up his mind to spend the afternoon virtuously in the office, working at some statistics which Henry had asked him to prepare for him, but had apparently forgotten.

The "Mecca" at which he and Hatch were accustomed to meet was almost empty at this time of the morning.

It was not difficult to secure complete privacy for a confidential conversation. A waitress served them with their coffee, and retired to indulge in her own conversational recreation with her colleague. Two other men were drinking coffee and playing dominoes on one of the marble-topped tables at some distance away. Hatch, who seemed to have been engaged in other than clerkly work, for his hands were dirty, and he had not troubled to wash them, emptied out the box of dominoes; but Tony said: "I haven't time to play this morning. I shouldn't have come, but I particularly wanted to talk to you."

"Thinking of coming to Switzerland with me?" said Hatch. "I'm going. I've sacked myself since I saw you last. We may as well have one game to see who's to pay for the coffee."

He spread the dominoes over the table with a rattle, and Tony took his without further protest. "I'm in for a row with my brother," he said. "I don't quite know what line to take."

"Take the line that you're as good a man as he is," said Hatch, "and he's lucky to have you. Double six. Now then!"

They played the game through, and Hatch won, as he usually did, for he was inordinately clever at it. "What's the row about?" he asked.

Tony told him.

Hatch did not make his usual sharp surface comment, but looked thoughtful. "The funny thing is," he said, "that you had had rather a score getting them to take the stuff at all. Yet you didn't take the trouble to see it right through."

"Well, what do you make of that?" asked Tony.

"Oh, nothing much. But I shouldn't have thought you'd have been able to get them to do what they didn't want to in the first instance."

"Why not?"

"Well, because it's a valuable business quality, and I didn't think you had any. Come on, let's have another game."

"No, I'm not going to play any more. I don't understand what you mean. I don't lay claim to business qualities. I hate business from the bottom of my soul. Still, if you've got to do something you've got to do it."

"Yes, but you can't always do it. Some people might not have been able to get their own way over this blooming shipment, and you did. Only, as you didn't much care whether you got it or not, you didn't take the trouble to see it through. If you'd been working for yourself, you'd jolly well have seen that there was no chance of its going wrong at the last moment."

"That's probably what Henry will say, when we have it out together, and it's quite true, though I suppose I ought to be ashamed of it. Well, I am rather. It isn't fair on him to be taking his money for doing work for him and then not doing it."

"Well, I won't deny that it was pretty cool, clearing out at four o'clock, and saying nothing to anybody. What were you doing?"

"Oh, I was at the Institute."

Hatch laughed. He knew all about the Institute, though he would never have heard of it but for Tony. It

was a wonderful place, situated in a quiet square almost in the heart of the City. There were lecture rooms, used only in the evening, and a fine library, with every convenience for reading and writing, in a great room which took up the whole of the first floor, and was open all day. Tony had been given a reader's ticket, and had spent many happy hours there, browsing among books, and making the discoveries of youth in their golden realms. "Does Henry know about the Institute?" Hatch asked.

"Yes. In the winter I used to go and read there for an hour sometimes before going home. I don't suppose he knows that I go there in office hours. That's what he's got to learn." He laughed ruefully. "I shan't hide up anything. I wish I could get him to let me chuck business altogether. I shall never be any good at it."

"What do you read at the Institute? Novels?"

"I don't say that I've never read a novel there. But I don't go there for that. I've been reading a lot of poetry lately. I say, have you ever read Swinburne? I'd no idea what wonderful stuff he wrote till I came across 'Atalanta in Calydon.'"

"No, I've never read Swinburne, and I'm not going to. No good trying to improve me on those lines. Were you drowning yourself in Swinburne yesterday when you ought to have been looking out for business for the firm? Pretty sort of partner you'll make!"

"Look here, I shall get plenty of that from Henry. I don't want it from you."

"All right, old son. Sorry! But it does seem rather funny."

"Perhaps what I *was* doing may seem funnier still. I was trying to translate one of Horace's Odes into English poetry.

> Mark you how yon tall mountain stands:
> Flash from his head the glistening snows.
> Mark how the burdened forest bows,
> How still the streams in winter's bands.

I was rather pleased with it. When I'd finished I couldn't be bothered to go back to the office, so I went on and caught the 5.20."

"You really are a record!" said Hatch, with the wide grin that showed his crooked teeth. "But I say! That's pretty good, you know." He repeated the first four lines of the Ode in Latin, which had something of the same sort of effect from his lips as must have been made on the prophet when he heard speech coming from the mouth of his ass. "Funny thing how it sticks to you! I believe I could say off dozens of Odes if I wanted to. There was a lot of horse sense about Horace, though he told such a lot of lies about liking to be poor. Still, I suppose he only did that so that he could get more out of old Mæcenas. I'll back him against Swinburne anyway. You've got it exactly. 'Yon tall mountain.' Very neat! Nobody would have known that Soracte was a mountain. I don't profess to know much about these things, but that seems to me just about as good poetry as you'll find anywhere."

Tony knew that Hatch didn't know much about these things, and a cold whiff of doubt assailed him of the

value of his performance. "Perhaps it isn't much as poetry," he said. "It's a fairly close translation, and it was fun doing it. I'm going to do some more of them. If only I'd got that sort of work to do, instead of what I have! I didn't do enough work at school, but I know if I'd stayed on I should have got keen on it. And I should have been going to Oxford now. Three or four years of it, and working up to something all the time! I'll bet I could have taken a good degree."

"You wouldn't have taken a good degree. You'd have got keen on something else, and wanted to be doing that. And you wouldn't have done much of that either; you'd have been too busy having a good time. And working up for something! Good Lord! A degree! And when you'd got it you'd be just starting. You'd be exactly where I was when I chucked school four years ago and came into the City, and twenty-two or twenty-three instead of sixteen."

"Oh, that's rot. You were a dirty little office boy for a year, and you're not much more now. You can't keep a job, and whenever you get into a new one you've got to begin all over again. And now you're going to sit down to learn something which you might have done at the beginning. I reckon you've wasted your first four years. Beside, it's just as much to you to have a good time as it is to me, whatever you may say."

Hatch's grin did not diminish as he listened to this. "Go it, old son!" he said. "You've got it all wrong, but don't worry about that."

"How have I got it all wrong?"

"Oh, never mind. You'll know in a year or two. But

look here, if you want some advice I'll give it you. You're a fool if you chuck the chances you've got, just because you can't make up your mind to make good at what you've started on. From what I've heard, I should say your firm is going up all the time. Your brother is quite likely to be one of the big bugs in shipping; he seems to be getting on that way now. And there's a partnership waiting for you when you can make yourself worth it. Good Lord! if I'd a chance like that! You wouldn't find me crawling off to read Swinburne, or translate Horace. And you wouldn't find me going off to learn French and German either. You'd find me in that old office, or poking in and out of other ones, from the time they opened till the time they shut. I'd make myself as good a man as Henry, and a better one. And now you've got it. That's what E. P. H. says to you. Let's have another game, and then I must be off."

He shuffled the dominoes, and Tony drew his absently. "There's something in it," he said. "But—well, it may seem odd, but I really don't know how to set about it. I've got a certain amount of work to do, and it doesn't take me all my time, or anything like it."

"Well then give yourself more work to do. Have you got double six?"

Tony was not unimpressed by this conversation, though he was unable to see that Hatch was following out his own excellent advice. He pictured him running about after business, using his cockney good-nature and insistence to get his own way, and putting up with rebuffs without showing discouragement. Of course he wasn't the sort to inspire respect, and it was impossible to think of

his dealing with the big men with whom Henry had come to be on such good terms. Tony thought he could do much better at that himself. It had pleased him that Hatch had given him credit for having been able to put something through. It had been interesting to get his own way with Johnson, Handsworth's freight manager, concealing his personal dislike and using address to overcome his objections. He didn't quite know how he had managed to do it, but according to Hatch it was because he had an ability that was a valuable business asset. He liked that idea. Business would be interesting enough if it meant chiefly that sort of negotiation, and extremely interesting if such negotiations led to making large sums of money. It was actually the first time that he had seen it in that light, and it was no more than a passing gleam. He had been in the shipping world for two years and knew scarcely anything about its larger aspects!"

Duncombe took his account of what had happened much as he had anticipated, but Tony's talk with Hatch had put something into his mind which he would not otherwise have thought of discussing with Duncombe.

"I think it might be fun buying and selling something," he said. "I believe I could do rather well as a shopkeeper. But with shipping it's all so complicated, you don't know where you are. I don't know where to begin."

"So is banking complicated," said Duncombe. "But it's interesting enough."

"I wish I'd got a job like yours. I like tackling figures. I've just had an hour of it, and the time flew away like anything."

"Yes, but that's only clerk's work. You wouldn't get

very far only doing that. Of course you must learn it from the beginning, but some fellows never get beyond doing just what they are put on to. That's where you have a pull if you've had a good education. You know there's something more in it than that, and you set yourself to find out what it is."

"How can you set yourself to find it out? At school there were books, and people to teach you things. But they didn't teach you anything about business."

"It isn't any more difficult than the things they did teach you. There aren't many books, but there are some. When I knew I was to go into a bank, my old uncle who got me the job gave me Bagehot's 'Lombard Street.' Jolly interesting!"

"That's about banking, I suppose. I don't know of any books about shipping."

"It's about finance. Finance is behind everything. I should think you'd have to know about it, whatever business you took up, if you're to get on at it."

"I believe you can take courses in book-keeping."

"You left school too early," said the Old Wykehamist, laughing at him.

Tony was virtuously engaged over his statistics when Henry came bustling into the office at about three o'clock, and said: "I want to speak to you," as he passed on to his room.

"Now I'm in for it," said Tony to himself, as he followed him.

"What are you doing now?" Henry asked him shortly.

"I'm just finishing up those figures that you asked me to take out for you."

"What figures?"

Tony told him.

"Have you anything to do outside?"

"No. I've fixed up that business with Handsworth's. There's nothing else till we get the new requisitions in."

"Were you going to Mrs. Clitheroe's this evening?"

"Yes."

"Well, I promised to take Laura, if I could get away. You'd better come home with me by the 3.50, and we can all three go together."

So Henry was going to talk to him on his way home. That would at any rate be better than being dressed down in the office, with Mr. Richards and Petherick listening through the partition. Besides, he was on more equal terms with Henry away from the office; and although he had spoken shortly, as his manner was as the head of Dare & Son, Tony had an idea that the acuteness of his irritation with him was past.

The talk began as they walked to the station. "What were you doing when you left the office so early yesterday?" Henry asked him.

"I'd really finished up everything that wanted doing, and I went to the Institute. Of course I meant to come back, but I got interested in something and stayed longer than I had intended."

"You hadn't finished up everything there was to do. We nearly lost that shipment through your being away. And I asked you to take out those figures for me a week ago. I suppose you've only just got to work on them."

"I began them last week."

"Then you ought to have gone on with them, when there

was nothing else that wanted doing. But there's always something to do if you look out for it. How much time do you spend at the Institute? Away from the office, I mean."

"I should think on an average an hour a day—sometimes more, sometimes less." Tony was stiffening. He had meant only to be apologetic; but Henry's tone irritated him, in spite of his having been prepared for it.

"Well, it isn't right, Tony. I don't pay you for that. It isn't fair."

There was some alteration in his tone, which restored to Tony the sense of his fault. "I'm awfully sorry, Henry," he said. "It was a rotten thing to do—not to come back. I'll swear I won't do a thing like that again."

"Well, of course that was inexcusable," said Henry, as uncompromisingly as ever, but still with the same hint of relenting in his voice. "You've seen for yourself what it might have led to. I don't want to rub it in, and I'll depend on your word that it doesn't happen again. But that isn't all about it, you know. I was rather pleased, when you first got that ticket for the Institute, that you spent time reading there before coming home. Of course I knew that you used to cut off early sometimes, but I'd no idea that you had taken to spending time there as you say you do. An hour a day! And sometimes more! That *must* have meant shirking your work. Well, it did mean that yesterday, didn't it?"

The question took off the edge of the rebuke. "Oh, yes, I know," said Tony. "But that was really the first time that it has happened. I've done the work that I've had to do."

"Yes, you've always done that fairly well. I don't want to make it out worse than it is. I wouldn't even say that you had shirked anything, but for this. Still, you don't take any interest in it, and of course while your interests are so divided you won't. You're not getting on. I could get a clerk to do everything you do in the office, and at half what I pay you."

It crossed Tony's mind to say that he wished he would. But he was relieved at the way Henry was taking it, and was not feeling combative. "There's really not enough for me to do," he said, rather weakly, for he did not feel that to be an excuse.

Perhaps Henry did, for he took it up at once. "I've felt that," he said. "Ours isn't like a big office where there's a great deal of routine work, and it's just a question of dividing it among the staff, and having a staff that fits it. As a matter of fact, as things are at present, it's a one man business. I'm getting more work to do myself than I can get through, and there isn't much of it that I can delegate. I'm thinking of taking on a secretary, and if you had shown yourself keener on the work I'd have taken on you. But of course I've got to have a man whom I can rely on at every moment. As it is, I shall get somebody highly trained, who can write shorthand. It will be worth my while to pay a good man well. I can go about with him and pick up business, and he'll have to see to the details. I shouldn't have wanted to keep you at that for very long, but it would have been a good way for you to get inside things, and learn how business is to be obtained. However, it seems to me out of the question. After two years' experience of the

business, you ought to have been just the man for me, except for the shorthand, which I might have done without. And you would have doubled your screw at a stroke. But the fact is that you're not up to it, Tony, and I must have a man who is."

They had arrived at the station, and Henry bought his evening paper, and read it for some time after the train had started. Tony also affected to read a paper, but his thoughts were with what Henry had been saying.

The chief thing that struck him was that he might, as Henry had said, have doubled his income at a stroke. He could understand that, if he could understand very little else of the significance of what had been said. He knew, better than Henry did, how much he had "slacked," though it was true that he had done the work he had been given to do not incapably. He blamed himself for the slackness, because here would have been his chance, if he had been ready to take it. Twice the screw he was getting, and all his anxieties done away with! And yet—to spend his days in attendance upon Henry, carrying out his instructions—it wouldn't have been an inviting prospect. He had heard Henry giving terse instructions to Mr. Richards to carry through the details of something that he had put in hand, and he had heard his tone of veiled impatience when Mr. Richards had gone to him for further information. Mr. Richards was a clerk in a thousand, conscientious, thorough, and understanding, up to a point. But he had little initiative, and he wanted everything cut and dried. Sometimes, as a boy, Tony had sat in his father's room and listened to the deliberate discussions between Mr. Dare and his head clerk, in which

every point had been threshed out in detail, and there had seemed to be time for interminable discussion. That was at an end now. Henry would never forget the respect owing to a man who had been his father's friend as well as his clerk, but he wanted some one with a quicker understanding than Mr. Richards's to supplement him, and he could not always disguise his impatience at having to explain in close detail what ought to have been already grasped and acted upon. He would certainly not disguise any impatience he might feel if Tony stood in the place of Mr. Richards. It would be living in a bath of constant hot water to work with him in that way, and Tony knew that he hadn't the knowledge that Henry would expect of his lieutenant. He had thought that he might ask him to give him the chance, but during the few minutes he had for reflection he became cold to the idea. It would be a dreadful life, hardly to be rewarded by the money to be earned by it.

Hatch would have told him, and even Duncombe might have seen it, that it would have been his great chance, if he had been prepared to fight for it, and to overcome the difficulties that it would have brought with it. For, while helping Henry, he would have been helping himself, to a grasp of essentials, in a way that could not have been improved upon. He would have been taken right away from the routine work which was leading him nowhere, and have been fitting himself for the future that had been held out to him, but for which he was hardly more fit than when he had first come into the office. But he saw nothing of this himself, and was divided between relief at not having to take on work so uncongenial and

regret that his general failure had already become apparent.

Henry didn't seem to have much more to say to him after all. Perhaps he was too much immersed in his own capabilities and opening opportunities to be worrying himself about the much younger brother for whom he was already providing so much more than he could have obtained for himself. It was only natural that a boy brought up as Tony had been and going to work at a comparatively early age, should be more eager over his amusements than over his work. And it was not entirely amusement over which Tony spent his time, and some of the time that was not strictly his. Many of his tastes were intellectual, and he was pursuing them in some ways that were worthy of respect. Only, one couldn't make a living out of such tastes, unless they were more concentrated than any of Tony's, and then not the living that was open to him, by which he would be able to cultivate them as recreations and not as supports. The boy had plenty of brains. By and by he would wake up to the necessity of applying them to the work that would bring him greater rewards than he could have gained from any other open to him. In the meantime, of course, he must be kept strung up to the work he had to do, but perhaps it was partly Henry's own fault that it was not such as gave him much chance of showing what he was worth.

Some such idea seemed to be in Henry's mind, when he put his paper aside, and said, as if resuming an interrupted conversation: "I don't blame you altogether for not filling in all the time that you have to spend at the office. I know it's difficult at your age to make work for

yourself, and I might have given you more to do if I hadn't been so busy that I haven't had much time to think about it from that point of view. It just so happens that none of the new things at which I've been working have wanted much extra clerical work, and of course the old-established business is pretty well covered by Mr. Richards and Benson. But I've really very little fault to find with the way in which you have done the Colonial Agency work. You could take on something else of the same sort, and I think it's likely that Hopwoods are going to put something into my hands soon that they won't want to work directly themselves. Don't say anything about it yet; but if they do, I'll put you on to it. And I'll give you a commission on what it brings in. It always seems more worth while to work for a commission than for a salary, and I think you ought to make another fifty pounds a year out of it, perhaps more. There now, Tony! Try and take as much interest in what is going to earn you your income as you do in other things. It's going to be a very good income by and by, if you use your brains over the work. It's interesting enough, and you've got a chance that doesn't come to many. It's me that's giving it to you, you know, and making it worth more every year. Try and do the best you can for me in return."

This changed the current of Tony's thoughts altogether. Another fifty pounds a year would make him a rich man, according to his standards. Salaries were not so high then as they are now, and he knew that he was very well paid at the eighty pounds a year which he drew from the office. If the new work was no more difficult

than what he had to do now, he would be glad enough to undertake it for its own sake, and escape the boredom which hung about his unoccupied hours. Besides, the firm of Hopwood & Sons numbered among the Sons the most admired of his Hilbury friends, and it would be a pleasure to come into contact with them in the City. He had half intended to make a plea to Henry to release him from his work in the City altogether, and give him the chance of doing something else—he didn't quite know what. But he had no wish for that now. The future was rosy once more.

And really, Henry was a good sort, in spite of what Tony was accustomed to call his tiresomeness, which often disappeared just when it might have been expected most to show itself. He might have made himself very unpleasant over what had happened, and could hardly have been blamed for doing so. Well, he shouldn't have occasion for censure again, and Tony made up his mind to show himself more considerate of him at home, where the tiresomeness had not always been on one side.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY AND LAURA

When Tony walked up with Henry and Laura to Mrs. Clitheroe's an hour or so later, it would have been difficult to imagine him recently anxious about coming under Henry's displeasure. Indeed, he was aware of the difference himself, and was faintly amused by it. That air of self-importance which was growing on Henry and seemed not to be out of place in the City, where he was so steadily rising to a position of dignity, sat on him rather ludicrously as he walked by the side of his wife, with that curious effect of being captive to her which some men, especially of his class, create in the marital companionship of middle age.

Henry carried his tennis shoes with his racquet, and the conjunction of black boots with white flannel trousers and a dark tweed jacket added no dignity to his stiff shortish figure. Tony, moving along easily on his long legs, his slim form fittingly clothed for his exercise, made a strong contrast to him, not only by his youth and good looks. Laura seemed to emphasize her husband's loss of youth. She was nearing forty, but with her thin upright figure she might still have passed for a young woman if she had kept any of the inclinations or attributes of youth. It had seemed to Tony of late, in spite of his living constantly with her, and taking little notice of small changes, that she had been young in some ways two years before, but was young in no way now.

Two years ago she had been pleased and occupied with getting into the pleasant house that they had taken at Hilbury, after ten years of married life in a little house in a more crowded and townified suburb. It had seemed to be the opening of a career for her. With the furniture and effects that Henry had inherited from his father, and the money he had provided for whatever else she wanted, she had the opportunity of creating a home, and she had done it very well. She had also run it well, with good servants, and no necessity for reductive economy in the way of living.

Henry had lived in Hilbury in his father's house before his marriage, and Tony had always lived there. They knew between them most of the residents who made up the chief society of the sociable place, and Laura was "called upon" to an extent that gratified her, and occupied her for some time receiving and returning the calls. But there it seemed to end. She liked the formalities of social intercourse, which kept her busy, and pleased with the impression of taking her part. But she had little taste for real sociability. People didn't want her. She had nothing to give them.

Henry hadn't much to give either, and had no taste at all for the formalities. He liked to spend his evenings at home, and grumbled if he had to go out two or three nights running. He made a few personal friends, and liked to have them in his house, and to go to theirs. But that meant having their wives, and Laura didn't always care for their wives.

In those days, before various means of communication had linked up all outlying parts of London, the society

of such places as Hilbury was largely self-contained. It was divided up into various sets, the constituent members of which overlapped here and there, but it was seldom that new faces were seen at the Hilbury dinner tables. It was the day of big formal dinner parties, which were not, however, of an unsociable formality, with the same people constantly meeting at them. But these set dinner parties were the preserve of the older people who lived in the larger houses. Mrs. A asked Mr. and Mrs. B to dinner, and then Mrs. B owed Mr. and Mrs. A a dinner in return, which debt she presently paid in full. With all the people to whom they owed dinners, there wasn't much room for anybody else when they were in process of paying their debts. Laura and Henry, who didn't live in one of the bigger houses, had few dinner invitations to them, but they had invitations to the houses of newcomers intent upon following the conventions, and over this they had their first dispute.

Henry was taken rather unwillingly, during their first winter, to dinners given by people to whom he had no objection except that he didn't want to join with them in this commerce of entertainment. By and by Laura suggested a dinner party of their own. They "owed" dinners, to these people and those. But Henry wouldn't have it, and said so quite firmly. He saw where it was going to lead to, if they once began. Indeed, he must have foreseen the suggestion, for he had figures immediately at hand with which to confound Laura. If they had a dozen people to dine with them in that way only six times a year—and they would hardly get through with that—it would cost them at least a hundred pounds,

and he wasn't going to spend money in that way, for the sake of entertaining people very few of whom he cared about.

Laura was not unimpressed by the estimate, for her housekeeping had been done hitherto on a very careful scale. A hundred pounds would pretty well have covered her weekly bills for a year, as they had lived before. But she was getting used to spending much more money in her new surroundings, and Henry was not niggardly, though he liked to see value for his outlay. It was just upon this point that the conflict waged itself. If Henry couldn't have afforded it, she said, she would never have thought twice about it. But if they didn't do what others did, they couldn't go on accepting their invitations. Henry said he didn't mind that in the least, cutting through the obvious awkwardnesses which his decision would entail, in the way of a man who has made up his mind. As for spending money over providing good food and good wine for his friends, he didn't mind that at all. He liked to see his friends at his table, a few at a time and as often as Laura liked, within reason. But of course that was not what Laura wanted. She found conversation with all but the very few people with whom she was intimate burdensome. She would have been willing to undergo the difficulties of it for the sake of playing her part as hostess on occasions of dignity, but shirked it otherwise.

Eventually a compromise was come to with an evening party. Tony had some hand in that. He had listened to the dispute with interest, but had modestly refrained from taking part in it. He had little use for set parties himself, unless they included something attractive to

youth, which was seldom invited to the Hilbury dinners. He went wherever he wanted to, and was made welcome where Henry and Laura had no place whatever. He quite sympathized with Henry in his wish to see his real friends at his table, and there were one or two of Henry's friends who were his also, for he did not confine his embracing predilections entirely to boys and girls of his own age. But he also sympathized to some extent with Laura. He had been brought up in the Hilbury tradition. You must give something in return for what you received, unless you were to drop out. Nobody would expect people who obviously couldn't afford it to give parties of any sort, and they wouldn't be made the less welcome to other people's parties because they didn't. But if you had a house big enough, and money to do it with, you ought to give a party occasionally. You were not doing your duty by your neighbours unless you did.

Laura talked to him about it. She was incensed with Henry, who followed her lead in so many ways, but had planted his feet stubbornly to resist this one. She talked about him in a way she had never done to Tony before, and rather shocked him; for he had always thought of her and Henry as inseparables, as indeed they had been before the recent enlarging of their lives. Henry was getting more and more wrapped up in his business, she said, and seemed to think that he could behave towards her as if she were a clerk in his office. Surely it was for her to decide upon what should be done in the home, where a woman ought to rule. Tony grinned aside at this, but kept silence. It wasn't as if Henry wasn't making plenty of money. She didn't want to spend it unreasonably, as

so many wives did; she hoped she knew her duty better than that. But they could well afford to do what other people did, and if Henry didn't want to, he ought not to have settled in a place like Hilbury. She supposed it was because he knew that he wasn't made to shine in society; but . . .

She did not finish the sentence, but Tony understood her to be intimating that she did consider herself constructed so to shine, and grinned again aside.

He brought forward arguments which decreased her desire for embarking on the interchange of dinner parties, in the circle which alone seemed open to her. His own tastes were catholic. He had friends among all sorts, but he was somewhat precociously aware of social values, and, other things being equal, preferred to find them among the older-established residents of Hilbury rather than among the new. These had come in of late years to occupy the houses that were always being built, or the old ones that were vacated, and it was indisputable that taken as a whole they were not of the same quality as the recognized members of Hilbury society, as it had existed for generations. Those who were so were absorbed into it, but the bulk of the newcomers remained outside, and were beginning to form a separate society of their own, which would split up still farther as the inevitable extension proceeded. It was just what would appeal to Laura to have it pointed out that she was identifying herself with the new people, if they were to be the chief of those with whom she exchanged these formal dinners. "You don't want that," said the astute Tony. "You know all the right people, and if they haven't asked you much to their

grub-fights, you go to all their other parties. You ought to give an 'At Home.'"

"But that's just what Henry said he never would do, when we came here," said Laura. "You remember very well that we talked it over, when he made the back drawing-room into his library. He said it didn't matter, because he never intended to have big parties, and we should never want to use both rooms as a drawing-room."

"I might be able to make him change his mind about that," said Tony.

Henry gave way about the party, and Laura had it; but it was an obvious failure. The people whom she didn't much want came in force, and some of the others refused her invitation. It was so obviously a party given in return, and there was no particular point about it otherwise. She had scarcely any real friends among her guests, and many of them must have asked themselves before the evening was out what they were doing there. There was a tendency to split into factions. There was nothing to do but talk and listen to whoever could be persuaded to play or sing. There was the usual evening party supper, in the dining-room that was rather too small for it, with the men helping the ladies from the table pushed to the end of the room. Tony had been to many such "At Homes," as they were always called, and was sure of meeting many of his friends at them. There were plenty of his friends at this one, but his sense of responsibility prevented his amusing himself with them exclusively. He worked hard to give some life to the assembly, but could make no headway against the blight that seemed to have descended on it.

When the last guest had departed, he threw himself into a chair and looked at Henry and Laura to see how they would take it. Somewhat to his surprise, Laura exhibited satisfaction, though she had noticed that the two factions had not coalesced, and said it was a mistake to ask them together. "But I think they all enjoyed themselves," she said, rather pathetically, "and I'm sure the supper was nice."

Henry was under no illusion of his guests having enjoyed themselves. He had gone about among them and done his best: but he possessed hardly more social aptitude than Laura, the only difference between them being that he knew it and she didn't. He was in a grumpy rage at having been forced into doing something that had turned out no more successfully than he had anticipated. "If it hadn't been for Tony," he said, "it would have been the most ghastly failure on record. It was bad enough as it was, and it's the last time we shall ask people here in that way."

He stumped off to bed, leaving Laura scandalized out of her self-approbation. She appealed to Tony, who was sorry for her, and said that he didn't think it had been so bad as all that. He was confounded within himself at the conviction of how bad it had actually been, and his feeling about it showed through his well-meant efforts at consolation.

Laura couldn't find anybody else to blame for the failure, and was by no means inclined to blame herself. The subject was hardly mentioned again between the three of them, but a gradual change came over her. She refused the next dinner invitation that she received, and

wanted to refuse an invitation to an evening party at the house of some old friends of Henry's father, which he wanted to go to. It seemed as if she had come round to his way of thinking on the subject of formal entertaining. But the agreement was only on the surface. She had given up the effort to make her way in general society, and was on a new tack altogether.

She had always been a stiff churchwoman, and in the place where they had lived before coming to Hilbury, she had allied herself, and Henry with her, to a church in which a more advanced ritual was practised than he had been accustomed to. On coming to Hilbury they had taken sittings at the Parish Church, but she had gone occasionally to a church at the bottom of the hill, which was about as "high" in doctrine and practice as anything then known in Anglicianism; indeed so high that the devoted and high-spirited Vicar was in constant dispute with his bishop, which he didn't mind in the least and of which his parishioners were rather proud. Shortly after the fiasco of the evening party Laura proposed to transfer herself and Henry permanently to this church. Henry wouldn't consent to that, but said that if she would go to the parish church with him in the morning she could go where she liked in the evening, though he would not promise always to accompany her. It soon came to her going to the other church on most Sundays for the Early Celebration, sometimes to the parish church with Henry and Tony at eleven o'clock, and sometimes excusing herself and staying at home; and to Henry's nearly always staying at home on Sunday evenings. There was a cleavage between them, where hitherto their community of

aim had been at its closest, but there was no breach over it. Each of them seemed satisfied with the arrangement. Henry told Tony that he enjoyed his quiet hour among his books more than any other hour of the week, and Laura, free to do what she wanted, refrained from direct rebuke of his laxity, though she could not always prevent herself from making her approval of her own devotion apparent.

A few of the old-established residents of Hilbury had identified themselves with this new church, which provided them with a centre of interest rather different from anything else that was known there. There was much quiet work done from it in the poorer quarters that lay about it, and Laura was soon made use of. She worked and spent money, which Henry was always ready to provide on request. She became a somebody. She was known to spend much of her time at St. Cyprian's, and to be intimate with those who were also interested in its activities. The people she didn't want to know were gradually sloughed off, and she sometimes appeared at the houses of the others. She succeeded in creating the effect of a woman too busily engaged in good works to care about going much into society, and gained appreciably in social value on that account, especially among the people who didn't know what to do with her.

It was a godsend to that part of her which still craved for worldly distinction when Mrs. Clitheroe took the important house that Sir Cockburn Manifold had vacated on his retirement from the Bench. Laura became the first of her intimates, as she was almost the first to realize that Mrs. Clitheroe had not taken the Old Hall to continue its

traditions of somewhat exclusive hospitality, but was going to use its spacious rooms and beautiful gardens for the entertainment of all and sundry. Mrs. Clitheroe took her full part in the normal life of her neighbours, being a woman of abounding vitality and comprehensive sympathies, and having a family of young girls and a boy for whom friends and recreations had to be provided. The chief interest in her life did not show itself obtrusively at first, but Laura found it at once. If she had sat for the conventional time in Mrs. Clitheroe's drawing-room upon her first call, producing her prim banalities about nothing at all, she would not have got much farther with her. But she was getting into the technique. She had something to talk about to this woman, who was never without a subject of conversation herself, and might have succeeded in interesting Laura if she had not discovered her as one of the elect, but would certainly not have been interested by her.

It was a triumph for Laura when she succeeded, very soon after Mrs. Clitheroe's arrival in Hilbury, in getting her to dinner to meet Father Bourdon, the Vicar of St. Cyprian's. The dinner, to which Mrs. Clitheroe's young daughter was also invited, under a convention of equalizing sexes, was as much of a success as the "At Home" had been a failure. Father Bourdon was a delightful creature, bubbling over with wit and loving-kindness. On the few evenings on which he found time to dine out he did it to enjoy himself. Mrs. Clitheroe was almost his feminine counterpart, and if she had not been some ten years older than he, or he had not held certain prejudices against the state of matrimony, they ought to have made

a match of it after this auspicious introduction. These two did most of the talking. The company was not large enough to admit of separate conversations, or Laura might have spoilt it by claiming the ear of Father Bourdon for her own polite vapidities, and bored him exceedingly. But she was content to sit at the head of her table and beam; and she looked her best, in a quiet but expensive gown bought for the occasion. She could be taken as the woman of good breeding and respectable station who might if she liked spend her time and her money in the enjoyments and amusements of her own class, but preferred to give herself to good works—just such another, in fact, as Mrs. Clitheroe herself, who, however, thoroughly enjoyed the amusements of her own class when she had time for them.

Henry played his part, as the solid but rather uninteresting business man, whose duty it is to provide a good table for the enjoyment of those whom his wife chooses to ask to it, not to be left out of account by them, but hardly expected to shine. Tony was entirely himself, and also at his best, for he thoroughly enjoyed the conversation of the chief guests, laughed whole-heartedly with them, and obtruded himself into their conversation no more than youthful modesty made fitting, but kept no irksome silence. Father Bourdon was charming to him, as he was also to Mrs. Clitheroe's young daughter, not yet "out," who made up the table. He was evidently attracted by engaging youth, and these were two attractive young people, one of whom was being trained in the way in which she should walk, and the other might possibly be brought to be. It was evident before the evening

was out that Tony had made a complete conquest of Mrs. Clitheroe, who paid more attention to him after dinner than she did to Father Bourdon, and seemed inclined to make him her chief lieutenant in the sociabilities she announced herself about to set in hand for the young people as soon as she had thoroughly settled herself.

When their guests had gone, the scene after the evening party a few months before was repeated, but with very different feelings behind it. Laura was inclined to show herself jealous of the impression that Tony had made, and the warmth of the invitation that Mrs. Clitheroe had given him to the intimacies of the Old Hall. But Henry patted him on the back, and said: "You've helped us through again, old boy," and went up to bed without expressing an opinion of Mrs. Clitheroe, or of Father Bourdon, both of whom he had met for the first time.

Tony became free of the Old Hall, as he was of Hilbury Grange, the Hopwoods' large hospitable house, where he had been made welcome ever since his boyhood, and enjoyed himself almost as much there; but not quite, for although he was inflammable towards girls he preferred the society of his own sex in the mass, and all but one of Mrs. Clitheroe's five children were girls. He was half-inclined to fall in love with Maisie, the one who had dined at "Danefield." She was very pretty, and amusing in a light-hearted talkative way. But she showed no signs of encouraging him to more than a general family friendship, and he was a trifle scared of the taboos that sometimes peeped out in Mrs. Clitheroe's brood of neo-Catholics.

Neither he nor Henry moved any nearer to the form of religion with which Laura now closely identified herself. Henry had been brought up somewhat strictly in the opposite school. He had cast off its rigours under the early influences of his marriage, and was perhaps disinclined to submit himself to new forms of rigour at a time of life when he had attained to most of what he had ever desired, and had hitherto unforeseen ambitions opening out before him in other directions. He liked both Mrs. Clitheroe and Father Bourdon, but his judgments were not apt to be affected by sentiment, and he had no inclination to submit himself to their persuasive qualities. Father Bourdon came again to his house, and sometimes tapped him for money, which he gave him generously. But he was not drawn within his sphere of influence, and refused all invitations to controversy with Laura.

Tony, whose judgments were very largely affected by his likings, might have been expected at least to waver towards the opinions of a man whom he liked and admired as much as he did Father Bourdon. But there were many reasons why he did not put himself into a state in which he might have succumbed to him. The chief of them was that under their surface harmony he saw the widening rift between Henry and Laura, and saw it as of Laura's making. He had established relations with Laura on his own account that were marked with less friction than those existing between him and Henry, but he knew instinctively that in spite of her pursuit of religious observances and his laxity, Henry was the better man of the two.

CHAPTER V

ATTRACTIONS

The Old Hall of Hilbury was one of those delightful old places still to be found in the suburbs of London, though gradually disappearing, in which the charm of the country is brought within the orbit of the town. It was a comfortable mansion of early Georgian date, mellow and inviting without, and possessing within more in the way of carving and panelling than belonged strictly to its date. It stood in a secluded corner of the leafy suburb, and its fine trees hemmed it in on three sides, but its south front looked over wide lawns on to the view of undulating meadow and deep woodland which the high position of Hilbury gave to its more favoured residences. It was much the same view as had been enjoyed from Ifield Lodge, Tony's old home, and he always saw it now with an added appreciation of its beauty.

This was just before the days when the general run of people began to prefer old furnishings to new. Even the old houses of Hilbury, of which there were many still left, were furnished and decorated for the most part in the style of the mid-Victorian era, and whatever alterations were made from time to time in the houses themselves, so as to adapt them to modern tastes and requirements, seldom failed to spoil them to exactly the extent to which they were carried. But the Old Hall was a fortunate exception in both respects. It had been left alone, and

when Mrs. Clitheroe took it she was not inclined to spend more on it than would put it into repair and freshen it up. She put into it furniture that had come from a country house of about the same date as this one, and much of it was considerably more valuable, even in those days, than she knew of, though she had cultivated tastes and had kept the best of the beautiful things that had come to her from past generations. They seemed to compose of themselves in the rooms so suitable to them, and created a gracious old-world effect which few at that time would have tried to create for themselves, but many admired.

There was only one tennis lawn at the Old Hall, but there was a bowling-green, where the elders were wont to disport themselves, and other garden games which took up less room. The scene was fairly peopled when the Dares arrived. Mrs. Clitheroe's Hilbury guests usually came rather later, when the men were free from their work; but the people from elsewhere came up earlier in the afternoon. A men's four was being played on the tennis court, the members of which were two of the younger masters of the school and two young clergymen, one of whom wore his Roman collar with a sort of black bib attached to it upon a grey flannel shirt, and his black trousers. But he was the best player of the four, and as he was an "Honourable" as well as a "Reverend," any oddity in his costume was considered by those who took notice of it to do him credit, as indicating his whole-hearted acceptance of the blessed state of Poverty. The play was good enough to draw the attention of onlookers, and others were sitting and walking about the gardens.

Among these were none of Mrs. Clitheroe's pensionaries from the East End, except four old ladies in respectable close-fitting bonnets and beaded mantles, who were in temporary occupation of what had been the coachman's quarters. For Mrs. Clitheroe did not "keep a carriage," and took in a succession of her friends in this way during the summer, and made them free of the gardens, whoever else might be in them.

To a couple of these old ladies, sitting peacefully on a garden seat with their backs to the view, and engaged in absorbing conversation about absent friends, Laura immediately betook herself. It was one of the most genuine points in the character that she had adopted that she was at her ease with those whom she had only lately learnt not to call the lower classes. Much of the work which she undertook in connection with St. Cyprian's was no mere irksome duty with her, but made up for the general sociability with her own class which she was temperamentally incapable of enjoying. She had left off playing any games, even at home, and perhaps felt that her presence at Mrs. Clitheroe's Tuesday tennis parties involved some readiness to perform good works; but she would certainly rather have occupied herself with the old widows than with any others of Mrs. Clitheroe's guests, except possibly with the clergy, if any of them had ever shown the desire to occupy themselves with her.

Henry went off to the bowling green, with a party that was immediately made up, and Tony, with the sense of relief which always came to him when he went out with Henry and Laura and had seen them satisfactorily disposed of, was free to follow his own devices. He stayed

by the side of Mrs. Clitheroe, as he looked about him, partly because he liked to be in the position of being called upon by her to act in some way as her lieutenant, which gave him the gratifying feeling of being more valued than her other guests, partly because Maisie happened to be there too.

"Oh, Tony," Mrs. Clitheroe said, "when this set is finished will you help Maisie to make up another one? Two men and two girls. Do you know Miss Rashdale? I don't think she has played yet."

She indicated a girl standing by the court some way off, with her face half turned away from them, upon whom Tony had already cast his exploratory eye; for she showed a graceful form, and if the face under her wide-brimmed hat was in keeping with it, she must have been of unusual pictorial quality. As Mrs. Clitheroe mentioned her name she turned, and Tony laughed and said: "Yes, of course; but she has grown up since I saw her last."

Dolly Rashdale was the daughter of one of the masters, and Tony had had passages with her, in his boyhood. She had been sent abroad two years before, at the age of sixteen, and had now returned, a much more noticeable person.

He went to her, with Maisie Clitheroe, and laughingly claimed acquaintance. Yes, she had come back extraordinarily pretty, and with an air of style about her which she would probably not have attained but for her foreign sojourn, though it was not so pronounced as to reduce the effect of her fresh English beauty.

She showed pleasure at seeing Tony again, and said he looked just the same as ever. "I can't say the same of

you," he said. "You've greatly improved"; thus getting back at once on to their old terms of intercourse, which had continued friendly after both of them had got tired of a winter's flirtation. He partnered her in the ensuing set. She did not play at all well, but her actions were graceful, and his pleasure in the partnership was not appreciably diminished by their being beaten, six games to one. She told him that she had not had a racket in her hand for two years, and gave him to understand that nobody but himself could have pulled her through. The compliment, coming from a person of such attractions, pleased him, and he determined to find further opportunities of intercourse with her, unencumbered by the necessities of a game, or the presence of its players.

. The opportunity did not come until after supper, when they met in the garden. It was a soft summer night, and there were others who preferred to walk under the stars rather than sit in the crowded drawing-room, taking part in the songs with which the company was entertaining itself. They were mostly in couples, and some of them even preferred the obscurity to be found among the thick trees bordering the lawns; but Tony had no idea of inviting his companion into those recesses, and they walked in the open, where everybody was at liberty to see them.

The invitation to come out, however, had not been given without some slight inward flutterings. If he and she had had no more than a few words with one another during the evening, he had been aware of her all the time, noticing how she comported herself, and how she talked or laughed with others. And all that she had looked and all that she had done had pleased his taste, critical in

such matters. His eye and ear had been alert to find in her some trace of affectation, such as might have shown itself in a girl who had just gone through her experience, and who might be tempted to emphasize what it had made of her. But he could find none. She was different certainly, but she had been rather precociously forthcoming in her pig-tailed state, and her foreign training had even softened some of her crudities, instead of emphasizing them.

But it is doubtful whether he would have experienced those inward flutterings if she too had not been aware of him during the evening, and shown it in a way to flatter his self-esteem, though, if he had not been on the alert, he might not have known that she was taking notice of him at all. He did seem to himself to have matured greatly during the two years since he had left school, to have acquired some of the distinction of a man in place of the careless self-acceptance of boyhood; and evidently Dolly was examining him in that light, as he was all the time examining her. Sometimes when he looked at her it was to find her eyes resting upon him. But she would immediately withdraw them. The impression was sinking in: she was making up her mind.

And then she seemed to have made it up. She did meet his eyes, and smiled at him, as if to encourage a renewal of the old friendship, or perhaps to create a new one, since neither of them was any longer what they had been as boy and girl. It was then that he felt that warmth under his ribs, of which he had had no recent experience, but was, unawares to himself, in a state of readiness to foster. He would have welcomed it in his intercourse

with Maisie Clitheroe, but it had not come to him from that quarter, and now he knew that any attraction he had felt towards her was as nothing compared to the attraction that he felt at this moment towards Dolly, though that was not yet so strong as to set himself off in pursuit of her. After all, he did know her. He had made love to her, in the way of a boy of fifteen to a girl of fourteen, and she had accepted his advances. And then each of them had entirely lost interest in the other. She was a new Dolly, as he was a new Tony; but was it possible to rekindle the old ashes? There seemed to be some life in them, but it might flicker out, if it was sought to blow up the fire. He was not eager to do that, but would warm himself at it if she did it.

"Are you sure you won't be cold? Don't you want a shawl or something?" he asked her in an offhand manner that concealed an emotion deeper than he wished to give way to at present. For she was disturbingly sweet and desirable in her young grace, as she stepped out of the open window, and her immediate smiling acceptance of his invitation, which he had manœuvred himself into a position to give her, had been a shaft to pierce him. It had all happened before, and with her among others, but Cupid's arrows had not yet lost their point, from whatever quarter they might come.

She laughed at him. "I'm not made of sugar-candy," she said. "But if you're afraid of the night air we might have one sharp turn and go in again."

He was quite equal to that sort of chaff, and to engage in it put him more upon an equality with her. She was a beautiful young woman, in her outward semblance as new

to him as if he had never seen her before, but she was also Dolly, whom he knew so well. And he was a much advanced young man, who had had experiences with which to meet those that she had brought with her from across the Channel to confound the stay-at-homes.

The conversation which followed slightly reduced the temperature of his feelings, for his critical faculty was by no means swamped, and this was the old Dolly showing herself, in whom this sort of thing had first attracted him, but of which he had got rather tired. And yet it pushed him on, as it had done before, to get something more out of it.

"Do you remember another night in a garden?" he asked her presently.

She did not pretend to misunderstand him. "That was long ago," she said. "We were only children then. Now we're grown up, and have put childish things away from us." (Dolly's father was a clergyman.) "At least, I should hope so."

"Oh, should you?" said Tony.

She laughed again. She showed a row of white even teeth when she laughed or smiled, and can hardly be blamed for finding as many subjects of merriment as possible. "I'm quite sure *you* haven't been wasting your time while I have been away," she said. "In fact, I've heard a good many stories about you already. I came here partly to see what Maisie Clitheroe was like; partly on the chance of seeing you again too, of course. In fact, to see you both together. I've no fault to find with your taste. She's very pretty, and very nice too."

Tony was a little disconcerted. He had thought a good

deal about Maisie Clitheroe, but didn't think that his incipient attraction had been noticed by anybody. "There's nothing in that at all," he said, shortly. "I come here a lot because I like them all. In fact, I think I like Mrs. Clitheroe as well as any of them."

"Oh, yes. And she thinks a lot of you too. That's evident. Why don't you ask her to have a walk with you in the garden?"

When Tony went home that night, and went up to his room, he meant to settle with himself how far he was really moved by this reappearance of an old flame, and whether he was going to encourage himself to pursuit, or hold off while there was yet time. He had imagined himself thinking it all over in detail, and coming to some wise decision. For he thought himself experienced in the ways of love, and had at least got as far as to know that there was a point up to which you were your own master, whatever might happen if you went beyond it.

But when he had gained the refuge of his room, at about eleven o'clock, other influences took possession of him. This large upstairs room, which looked over quiet fields, and was the only one occupied on this floor, meant much to him. He had his own possessions there, his books and pictures, and such of the furniture that Henry had assigned to him of what had been their father's as there was room for. He had tried to persuade Laura to let him have the use of an adjoining room for a bedroom, so that he could have this one entirely as a sitting-room. They hardly ever had visitors to stay, and there was no necessity for two spare rooms. But she had furnished them fully as bedrooms, and didn't want to change. Be-

sides, if Tony had his own sitting-room, he would always want to be in it by himself, and they wouldn't see him. And it would mean an extra fire, and two rooms to do instead of one. He had not yet overcome these reasonable objections, and in the meantime did well enough with one room, especially in the summer time, when the great fire question, which vexes the souls of careful housekeepers, was in abeyance.

It was always with a sense of relief and freedom that he came up here after saying good night to Henry and Laura, which he usually did soon after ten o'clock. To-night he had been irked by them on their way home. Laura had had the aristocratic young cleric introduced to her, and was full of him. Henry had had a surprising series of successes at the game of bowls, and wished to talk about that. He was not interested in Laura's curate, and she was not interested in his "woods," and Tony was interested in neither, though he made a sort of bridge between them, with a word now to one, now to the other. Laura went straight up to bed on reaching home, and Henry went into his library to read for an hour. Tony was free, for his own thoughts and his own pursuits.

He found upon reaching his room that it was a pursuit he was inclined to follow rather than a train of thought. He was excited by his meeting with Dolly, but his excitement had the effect of stimulating his brain to some exercise. The translating of Horace into English, which had revealed to him an unexpected knack of versifying, seemed just the thing to follow up. It had come so easily, and was so interesting. He had visions of translating all four

books of the Odes, and publishing them, in a little white volume, which would have a large sale, and bring him money as well as repute, as a scholar. People would be interested in a City man, one of the heads of a large shipping firm, with a world-wide repute as an Horatian scholar.

He sat down to it at once, and chose the fourth Ode of the First Book to begin upon. It took him two hours to finish it, and he hardly moved from his chair, except once or twice to go to the window and steep himself in the still beauty of the summer night. When he had finished, he stayed there for a long time, leaning out with his chin in his hands. He was completely happy. The worries of his life had fallen from him. The face and form of Dolly rose before him, as if to claim his attention, and he did not resist them; but their attraction was subsidiary to the keen pleasure he was feeling at having at last accomplished something that he thought good. She was something in the background that increased his joy in life, more, but not very much more, than the stillness of the night and the moon flooding the meadows with light.

But the ardour of composition still held him. He was half-inclined to start on another Ode, but thought that he had better polish this one, so as to make it as good as he was capable of making it, and to follow out one of Horace's own injunctions to the fraternity of poets, among whom he had now enrolled himself.

There was a hint of dawn in the sky when he had finished his second task, which had been almost more absorbing than the first. There was hardly a line that he hadn't altered, and now he thought it was very good indeed,

better than Conington's version, which he read for comparison. He had kept to the original metre, and thought that perhaps he would translate all the Odes into their original metres. But that could wait. He must go to bed now, but not before he had transcribed this effort of his Muse in a fair hand. This is what he wrote, taking a new quill pen, and putting forth all his calligraphic powers:

Fled is the sharpness of winter, and come in its turn the
pleasant spring-time;
Now creaking keels are drawn across the beach-stones.
Kine no longer shelter in steading, nor hugs the hind his
ingle.
The fields are gleaming bright, but not with hoar-frost.

Now comes tripping the choir Cytherean, in moonlit ranks
advancing,
Enlumining the lovely nymphs and graces,
Hand in hand on the lawns as they dance to a measure;
lurid Etna
Is shooting flame from Cyclopean forges.

Come, let us now be weaving a garland of bay about the
temples,
Or woven blossoms, since the earth doth yield them:
Come to the forest and offer a sacrifice meet for Pan the
wood-god,
A lamb or kidling, which is most beseeming.

Pale-browed Death is at hand, you can hear his ruthless
footfall,
Who strikes alike at hut and palace doorway.

See, my Sestius, short is the sum of thy years, and hope
is waning:
Night falls apace, and ghostly shades are pointing.

Dreary and dark and lone are the homes of the dead, for
thither wending
Nor dice nor wine-cup wilt thou carry with thee;
Nor wilt thou fill thine eyes with the young Lycidas with
his comrades sporting,
Not yet but soon to be beloved of maidens.

There! It was done. He signed it "Anthony Dare" with a flourish, looked at it once more with his head on one side, and suddenly felt inclined for bed.

It was light outside now, and the sky was touched with the rose of the coming dawn. The fields were silvered with dew, and a faint mist was rising from them. The hour was coming which Tony loved best of all, and he had half a mind not to go to bed, but to go out to his painting. But his verse-making had taken the place of other artistic inclinations for the moment, and he was tired with his protracted effort of brain.

He did try to think about Dolly as he got ready to go to bed, and to decide what he was going to do about her, if anything. But none of the emotion she had aroused in him could be recalled. Perhaps that settled it. She was really no more to him than she had been. At any rate, he was too sleepy to think about her now. He tumbled into bed, and was immediately asleep.

CHAPTER VI

ROBERT STENNING

Tony had a few friends outside Hilbury. One of them was Robert Stenning, satirist, scholar, critic, or whatever else might enable him to exercise his wits against all the humbug that he saw around him, or castigate the follies and self-sufficiencies of mankind. He made little money by his writings, but had a sufficiency without it, which left him free to write what he liked, when he liked, where he liked. He was perhaps as happily situated as a man can be who loves his life but is nearing the end of it. In bodily vigour he was many years younger than his age, for he was of sturdy build, and had lived hard all his life.

Stenning had lived for years in chambers in the Temple, but was apt to leave them at a few hours' notice, for a change of scene either at home or abroad. Sometimes he would take a pack on his back and set out at dawn, to walk north, east, west, or south, wherever the inclination of the hour might take him, to come back again, usually by train, when he had had enough of it. Sometimes he would prepare for a longer expedition, and his next letter to the "Times" might be written from any part of Europe, or even outside it. There was nobody to whom he owed any explanation of his doings from day to day. He had many friends, but none of them were allowed to encroach on his independence. He also had

enemies, but they were not among those with whom he came into personal contact. There was a depth of kindness and humanity under the combative front he presented to the world, and it had sometimes happened that some one whom he had enraged in a printed controversy, upon meeting him in the flesh, forgave him everything.

Tony had first met Mr. Stenning two years before at the Hopwoods' house at Hilbury, and afterwards at St. Leonards, where he had been visiting his grandfather. When he went into the City, nearly a year elapsed before he saw his friend again. Then he came across Mr. Stenning emerging from a bank in the City, and looking very much out of place in the street crowded with men in black coats, in his suit of light homespun and his wide-brimmed colonial-looking hat, which was the costume he affected in season and out. The friendship was renewed. Tony went to see him in the Temple, and sometimes he met him again at the Hopwoods'. But Mr. Stenning wouldn't go to "Danefield," because Tony had told him of Laura's high church proclivities, and he said she would be sure to want to argue with him. The previous Easter the pair of them had gone for a four days' walk together over the Yorkshire moors. Tony had been proud of the invitation, but as a holiday it had been too tense for him. He knew that Stenning liked him, and he was anxious to justify his choice of him for a walking-partner; but he was afraid of his searching critical mind, which fixed upon any little lapse in sincerity and held it up for inspection. In the jargon of a later day, this cramped Tony's style. Older people liked him for his bright youthful appreciations, very readily expressed; but he had to be-

think himself before he uttered what came into his mind with Mr. Stenning, or he ran the risk of that quizzical look, which he had come to know so well, the little pause, and then the pungent sentence over which he could sometimes laugh as an epigram, but which never failed to halt him in his flow.

Still, there was much in that holiday upon which Tony looked back with pleasure. The much older man had nearly walked him off his legs to begin with, but by the end of the four days he was in an abounding state of bodily fitness. He had revelled in the sombre majestic scenery, interspersed with the verdant beauty of wooded valleys, in the snug inns in which they had enjoyed stout Yorkshire fare, and in the deep sleep of beds mountain-high with down. And in spite of everything, he had made his way with Mr. Stenning. For when they parted he looked at him very kindly, and said: "Well, Tony, I dare say I've enjoyed it all more than you have. I'm a crusty old character, but you've blown off some of the cobwebs. Come and see me, boy. I don't want to lose you."

Tony hadn't much time for visiting outside Hilbury, nor much inclination, for when he was free of his work he made for home, where most of his interests and amusements lay; but he had gone to the Temple every now and then, and twice Mr. Stenning had asked him to dine with him, and he had met some of his friends. The dinners were cooked by Mr. Stenning himself, and very well cooked, and the wines were out of the common. So was the talk. Tony felt himself deep in the literary life of London, al-

most as if he had been dining with Dr. Johnson. Indeed, he had thoughts of becoming Robert Stenning's Boswell, and meant to put down all of the conversation he could remember when he reached home after the first dinner. But he was not yet inured to vintage port, and was so sleepy when he did reach home that he went to bed instead.

It was Mr. Stenning who had given him his ticket for the Institute, and who listened attentively to the account of his literary discoveries, but without attempting to guide him, except by the free expression of his own judgments, arbitrary enough, as it sometimes seemed to Tony, but generally to be respected. He knew of Tony's ambition to write, but never encouraged him to do so. "Go on reading," he would say. "You'll write quite soon enough —a good deal too soon, probably. If you take my advice you'll wait till you're forty. But of course you won't."

But now Tony had written something, of which he was proud; for when he woke up in the morning and read over his translation of the night before he still thought it exceptionally good. He thought he would take it to Mr. Stenning. Wednesday was the day which he called his half-holiday, and he was usually to be found in his rooms at about the time that Tony's work in the City was over. Tony would rather have come home and gone to the tennis club, where he would have met Dolly. In fact, he had only just not promised to meet her there, and she would certainly expect him. But he was still in a state of doubt about her, and thought it wouldn't do her any harm to miss him. If Mr. Stenning had gone away, which was

not unlikely at this time of year, he could come on home with little time wasted. It was some weeks since he had been to see him, and he didn't like being left too long.

Mr. Stenning was at home. Tony knocked and went in, as was his custom, and found him sitting at what he called his work-table, busy copying a large line engraving in pen and ink, which caused Tony the utmost surprise; for he had had no idea that he had any skill in drawing, and yet here was a considerable tract of his paper covered with a facsimile of the print before him.

"Ah, you've caught me at it," said Mr. Stenning, going on with his drawing. "I'm wasting my time and thoroughly enjoying myself. In fact, I cut my afternoon walk short by half an hour so that I could get to this. I only allow myself Wednesday afternoons and an hour on Sunday evening."

"It's perfectly ripping," said Tony. "I'd no idea you were an artist."

"That's just what I'm not. If I were, I shouldn't be doing this. I can only copy; but I can copy pretty well, eh?" He leant back in his chair and looked at his work with his head on one side.

Tony also looked at it, with his head on one side. "It's an absolutely perfect copy," he said. "You couldn't tell it from the real thing."

"Thank you, Tony. I'm a foolish old man. But I never say so to anybody but you, and I should be extremely offended if you believed me. Sit down. I'll talk to you, but I won't leave off what I'm doing. Or would you like to make us both a cup of tea? I want one, but I've been too absorbed to bother about it."

Tony busied himself over his task. Mr. Stenning told him where everything was to be found, but without looking round at him. The rooms were a model of neatness and order. Their owner sometimes boasted that no woman ever set foot in them, which was not quite true; but he did all the work of them himself, getting up at six o'clock every morning and spending an arduous hour over it. His regular income was so small that he had reduced all avoidable expenditure to a minimum, but he had told Tony that this household drudgery was good for him, and he had come to like it. "You can like everything you have to do if you make up your mind to it," he said.

It was an old-fashioned set of rooms, with panelled walls and carved mantelpieces. The sitting-room was large, with two recessed windows looking over the river, in one of which was the plain deal table at which Mr. Stenning was working. The chair on which he sat and the other chairs in the room were of the common Windsor pattern, except for two shabby arm chairs, not over easy. There was a worn Turkey carpet on the floor, but no window-curtains. A beautiful painted Florentine chest was the only piece of furniture of any value in the room. There was a tinkling cottage piano, on the top of which lay the scores of Handel's Oratorios, and Bach's "Wohltempirtes Klavier." There was a glass-fronted mahogany bookcase, full of calf- and vellum-bound school and college prizes, but Tony, wanting to look at a book, had found this to be locked, and Mr. Stenning had told him that he had lost the key of it years before. Another open bookcase contained an odd assortment of volumes, in which the paper-covered productions of Mr. Tauchnitz predominated.

The pictures on the walls were as heterogeneous as the books. Over the mantelpiece was a large painting of Samson pulling down the temple of the Philistines. Tony had gazed at it with an awestruck air upon being first introduced to it, but Mr. Stenning had told him that he need not trouble to admire it, for it had no merit whatever. He had lived with it for over thirty years, and ought to know by this time. He vouchsafed no further information as to why it was there. Besides this monstrous work of art there were a few early water colour drawings, engravings of some merit or of none, and some photographs, with a map of France pinned to the wall, and a green baize board, with notes and reminders pinned to that. Mr. Stenning had told Tony that he had bought nothing for his rooms but what was absolutely necessary since he had first occupied them. "I got rid of the lust of possession when I first came here and took hold of myself," he said, "and so got rid of one of the most disturbing temptations of a poor man. In fact I turned myself into a rich one. If I want to look at pictures the National Gallery is within a quarter of an hour's walk. If I want to look up books the London Library is only a little farther, and the British Museum about the same distance. I'm a very wise old man, Tony, and some day the world will find it out and buy all my books; but that won't be till after I'm dead. I can't help wishing they'd buy them now, but if they did it would no doubt turn my head, and I should commit a lot of extravagances, which wouldn't make me a bit happier."

"Well, now, tell me what you've been doing with yourself," said Mr. Stenning, when Tony had put his large

cup of tea by his side and sat drinking his own at his elbow.

Tony told him that he had translated two Odes of Horace into English verse, and had come to show them to him.

"Read them out to me," said Mr. Stenning, "and I'll tell you exactly what I think of them, without fear or favour."

Tony did so, not quite liking it. He read the ninth Ode first, and it did not seem nearly so good as when he had spouted the first lines to Hatch, who had been so much struck with it.

"Now for the other one," said Mr. Stenning, very busy with his pen and ink.

Tony felt better when he had read the fourth Ode, which still seemed to him very good, though not quite so perfect as on the night before.

"You've been reading old Topsy Morris, haven't you?" asked Mr. Stenning.

"Yes. I wanted to ask you what you thought of "The Earthly Paradise." I simply love it. But—er—"

"Steading and hind and ingle," said Mr. Stenning. "Good old Topsy! Well, that's not so bad, Tony. It isn't bad at all. We needn't say anything about the other one. You didn't take any pains over it. You did take pains with this one, didn't you?"

"Yes. It took me about two hours to do it, and nearly as long to polish it up."

"Splendid! I think you've hit upon something that ought to do you a lot of good. You haven't got anything to say yourself yet, but you want to get used to dealing

with words. I don't know of a better way than to take somebody else's ideas and concentrate yourself upon a way of expressing them, and in verse, which keeps you within bounds. There's no doubt that many great writers have got at it by simply wanting to write, and learning how to do it before they arrived at something worth writing about. I should say most of them did, and if I ever come across anybody who advances the other opinion in print, as I shall if I look out for it, I shall fall upon him and confound him with examples. Look here, Tony, I know you want to be praised for what you've done. It's only natural, and I'll say this, that you've done it a good deal better than I should have thought you could do it. So go on. Can you read Greek?"

"Yes, with a crib," said Tony. "I have to use a crib for Latin too."

"Oh, there's nothing against a crib, if you haven't learnt to do without it. Get hold of the "Anthology." There are lots of things there that you'll like turning about. When are you going away for a holiday?"

That ended the discussion of Tony's versifying. He was rather disappointed, but knew better than to revert to the subject again. Presently he grew restless, and said that he had promised to play tennis with some friends, and had only just looked in on his way home because he hadn't seen Mr. Stenning for some time, and wanted to show him his verses.

"Go and get your exercise," said Mr. Stenning. "Always see that you get your exercise. I hope she plays well enough to give it you."

Tony laughed and took his departure. It was no use

trying to keep anything from Mr. Stenning, but how did he know that he was hurrying off because it had suddenly come to him that he must go and play tennis with a girl? He had never told him anything about any girl, and as a matter of fact he often played tennis for a whole evening with other young men, and might have been going to do so now, for all that Mr. Stenning could know.

CHAPTER VII

MERSTEAD

Tony had seldom felt happier than when he and his friends, embarked upon their wherry, were at last sailing down the river to their first night's stopping-place. The scene, with which he had been familiar since his childhood, but had not revisited for two years, roused an emotion in him stronger even than he had anticipated. It was a hot August afternoon, and he had come from the discomforts of heat in London; but now, in cool flannels, with the water lapping the sides of the wherry, he felt the blazing sun as an added delight. How delicious it would be to plunge into the fresh waters of the river, and be dried by the sun afterwards! They would certainly find some place to bathe from, when they had tied up for the night.

The river banks, rich with the purples and pinks of loose-strife and willow-herb, and the lush growth of grass and reed and rush, slid past them, the aspens quivered in the light breeze, which was scarcely enough to fill the great sail towering high above them. As they turned a bend, a white-painted yacht framed itself in the trees that closed in the reach. Dark sails of wherries, white sails of yachts, could be seen across the low-lying ground where the growth of trees had ceased. The sights, and still more the indescribable scents of the quiet waters and the sweet melancholy of the country spoke to him with many voices, all of them reminding him of some half-forgotten episode of his childhood or boyhood. Oh, it was good to be free of the

town and to be sailing these rivers again. There was nothing like them anywhere else.

Tony's hope had been that they would spend the first night at Merstead, where his grandfather had been Rector, but there was not enough wind to take them so far. It had been agreed that they would not sail the wherry on Sunday. Sabbatarianism still lingered in those days in unexpected quarters, and though none of the party were rigid exponents of it, it had seemed quite natural that they should tie up. But they did move on early in the morning, so as to lie at the village, and Tony stepped ashore at Bob Cutting's wharf, feeling in every nerve of him that he had come home again.

Bob Cutting, blue-eyed and still flaxen-haired, though he was nearing fifty, gave him the warmest welcome, shaking his hand hard, smiling into his eyes, and finishing by clapping him on the shoulder. "There's a many here that will be glad enough to see you, Master Tony," he said. "I wish I could ha' let you have the *Norfolk Beauty*, but she was bespoke when you wrote. You'll find old Mrs. Girling a picture of health, and wanting to see you was never anything like it."

He turned away to give some directions. Tony was glad to hear about his old nurse, who had brought him up from babyhood, and meant to lose no time in going to see her. But there were others to whom Bob might have been referring, and he would have liked to ask him some questions if he could have had him by himself.

Bob didn't look any different. In his blue jersey, baggy serge trousers and brown canvas shoes, with his hands rough and tarry, he was the typical Norfolk waterside

character, with nothing about his appearance to show that he was owner of a thriving business and worth a substantial sum of money. And certainly there was nothing about him that would have made him seem likely to be the father of the chief lady of the village, and a titled lady at that. But two years before Bob's daughter had married Sir James March, who was past eighty now, while she was of Tony's own age, which was more than sixty years less. Tony would have liked to know whether Lady March had known that he was coming, and whether she was one of the many who would be glad to see him.

They had breakfast on the wherry, and afterwards Tony went to Bob's cottage, where breakfast was also just finishing. He had a welcome there too, from Mrs. Cutting, who was noticeably stouter than when he had last seen her, and from a diminished handful of children, all grown past knowledge. Mrs. Cutting's large family had always been well dressed in village fashion, but these who were left to her had not been dressed as they were now. They didn't, however, look much the happier for it, and discontent was plain to be seen on their ingenuous faces when they were bustled off by their mother to fulfil an engagement which was not Sunday school but seemed to be something like it.

When they had departed, Mrs. Cutting explained it to Tony. "Sir James likes Alice to teach them their Catechism," she said, "and afterwards they're took to church by Miss Garrett, who's Alice's own maid, like little ladies and gentlemen."

She spoke with a rather ludicrous air of importance, and as Tony looked at her, pouring herself out another

cup of tea, she seemed to him to have altered, though at first he had thought her the same comfortable contented matron as he had always known her. Her dress was elaborate. She was probably going to church herself later on, but she had generally been too busy to do that on Sunday mornings, and wouldn't have sat down to breakfast in her church-going clothes, whether or no. But Tony caught a glimpse of a short print skirt through the door leading to the back kitchen, which explained that. Mrs. Cutting kept a servant now, though it was unlikely that, being what she was, she left her much work to do on ordinary occasions. Together with the air of pride with which she spoke, an air of discontent, or at least of imperfect contentment, marked her face, which had been so smooth and untroubled. It was not likely that her daughter's fine marriage had added to Mrs. Cutting's happiness.

Bob's face had grown dark when she had spoken of the children going to church. "Like little ladies and gentlemen!" he echoed. "Yes, and sets in a pew by theirselves, unless mother goes and sets in it with them. Not good enough to set in their own sister's pew and too grand to go with the other kids!"

"How is Alice?" asked Tony, not surprised to find that the unequal marriage had brought disturbance to this once thriving contented home, but a little sad that it should show itself so plainly.

"Oh, Alice is all right," said Bob, the frown still on his face. "Her ladyship, you know. Sims to me that the old man won't be satisfied till he hears her own flesh and blood calling of her that."

"Oh, come now, father!" expostulated Mrs. Cutting.

"Nobody can't say that Alice plays the grand. Only last week was she setting in this very kitchen, sewing and talking of old times, till I declare I had to say to myself, 'She's my lady,' or I should ha' forgot it altogether."

"And won't do you no harm to forget it neither, when *she* wants to," rejoined Bob. "Oh, Alice is all right," he said again. "Going to have a baby soon. Me a grandfather, eh, Master Tony?" His face broke into a grin that sat more naturally on it than the dark look; but that returned as he said: "A lot *I* shall be allowed to see of it! Think myself lucky if I'm asked to the christening, and given a bit o' cake and a glass o' wine in the Servants' 'All."

"Well, and you can't expect no different from real quality to common folks like us," said Mrs. Cutting. "And there's no Servants' 'All about it when I go to see Alice, but drinking my glass of wine in the Housekeeper's room, almost as if I was quality myself, and Sir James taking off his hat to me whenever he meets me, and passing the time of day as polite as billycock. You don't count your blessings, father, and that's a fact."

Evidently Mrs. Cutting had submitted herself to the false glitter of her new connection, and had exchanged solid satisfactions for the merest shadow. Tony would not have expected her to take it in this way, and it was plain that she and Bob were now in frequent opposition, where before they had rubbed along together with never a real difference between them. Bob growled, and said he must be getting back to his work; but there was no work that wanted doing at the moment, or if there was he didn't do it, for he sat himself down on the bench outside his cot-

tage and filled his pipe, making it clear that he only wanted to get away from his wife, and didn't care if she knew it. "Anybody'd think the missus was half a ladyship herself," he said, "by the way she goo on. Sir James don't take his hat off to me when we meets, and that ain't often, thanks be! It'd suit me all right if I was never to set eyes on him again. What does he want to go out of his spere for, and marry a girl young enough to be his granddaughter? Aye, or his great-granddaughter for the matter of that! Disgusting I call it, quality or no quality; and there's no two words about it."

But Tony's grandfather and aunt had told him that Bob had made no objection to the marriage, though he had refused to give up any of his independence because of it.

"Well, it's done now," said Tony, "and you've got to make the best of it. What about Lydia? She lives at the Hall, doesn't she?" Lydia was Alice's younger sister.

"Yes, when she ain't at boarding-school. She's here now. You'll see her if you're going to church. Sets in Squire's pew, she do. It ain't decided yet whether the young uns are to be brought like that or left 'alf and 'alf. It'd cost a mort o' money to send 'em all to a school like Lydia's, and Sir James ain't no more ready with that than he ever was. And I ain't going to pay to turn 'em into something outside their spere, though that's what he'd like me to do, mean old hunks! and ain't above trying to get at the missus to nag at me about it. I suppose Lydia will marry quality, but I ain't going to bring up the young uns to it. If he likes to, that's his affair, but he'll be dead and gone long before they're ready for it,

so I don't suppose he'll put his hand in his pocket for no such purpose."

"Where's young Bob?" asked Tony. "Sailing the *Norfolk Beauty?*"

"No," said Bob, in the same tone of discontent. "Young Bob's been got out of the way. Don't do to have a common young working man about the place as brother to her ladyship. Wanted to get me out of the way too; made a offer to pay me out o' the business, and I was to set up somewhere else. Good offer it was too—I'll say that—and I wish I'd took it now. But I says no. My father and my grandfather had this yard afore me, I says, and their fathers was in the same place till as far back as any one know about, as you can see if you step into the churchyard and look at the graves, I says. I'm here on a yearly tenancy as they was, I says, and you can turn me out if you like, but I ain't going of my own free will. Well, he ain't turned me out yet, but he don't like having me here, and you never know what'll happen next quarter-day."

"What is young Bob doing?"

"Joined up with Becks, at Yarmouth. Sir James paid money for him. He'll pay money if it's for anything he want himself. Comes up here sometimes with one of their boats. They got three wherries and four yachts—doing very well. If I'm turned out o' this I can go and join 'em. But I don't want to do it, Master Tony. A man don't want to leave the place he's lived in all his life, and his fathers afore him. That's what I said to Sir James, and that's what I'll stick to. What harm am I doing him? Everybody knows I'm Alice's father, whether I'm at Mer-

stead or Yarmouth. It won't do *him* no good to have it said he turned me out. And it ain't done no good to have him marry Alice neither. I wish the old hunks had never set eyes on her."

So it had turned out much as might have been expected with Alice's family, bringing discomfort and uncertainty instead of the satisfaction which they had thought to derive from it. Tony felt sorry for Bob, but after all he might have stopped the marriage, or at least tried to do so. He had only himself to thank for what it had brought him. Perhaps he felt that some further explanation was needed of his consent to what he now stigmatized, for he told Tony that he had said no at first, but his wife had gone at him and muddled him up, and he had thought that he *might* be turned out if he got up against his landlord. And there was the knowledge behind it all that it couldn't be for many years. Alice would be free again, a young woman still, in a position immeasurably better than she could have gained otherwise. Bob didn't say this in so many words, and his present discomforts perhaps obscured the relief that was coming; but it was clear that the thought was always in his mind. There must be a change before long.

Tony went on to see old Nanny on his way to church, taking Stephen with him, whom she would be glad to see too. He had written to her, and the dear old thing would be expecting him, with what tender affection he well knew. Stephen, whose perceptions never failed him where others were to be considered, said that he would go for a stroll while Tony went into the cottage, and be somewhere handy when it was time for them to go to church.

There she was, in her neat bonnet and mantle, sitting with her hands on her lap under the geraniums on the window-sill waiting for him, her hair a little whiter, her meagre form a little frailer, but with the old love for him shining in her eyes and trembling on her lips. He was more moved at the sight of her than he had thought to be, for it had rather troubled him that he could not give her a love that would equal hers for him. But he did love her, and she brought back to him all the happy years during which he had been under her care, and his dear father had been alive, who had been so good to him. He was glad that Stephen wasn't there during those first greetings. The relations with whom old Nanny lived were all out of the way. She must have contrived to have this short time alone with him, and he found that he wanted it too.

When they could talk of others than themselves, Tony had to tell her about his aunt, who had been the chief lady in the parish of Merstead before Sir James had married, and she and her father had left it. The old Rector had died some months before. Nanny had something to say about him, but it was Miss Barrett who for years had made herself the personage. "I'm not saying anything against the new Rector or Mrs. Gandish," she said. "But of course it isn't the same. And there's nobody to come in and talk to me about you, dearie."

"Does—er—Lady March ever come to see you?" Tony asked.

"Oh, now, I ought not have said there's nobody. Yes, she does come in sometimes, and she knows I like to talk about you. She sits and listens—well, like real quality, I

sometimes say. You know, dearie, I don't say like some that she's out of her place. Good looks she has, as you know, and she's kept them, though just now—well you know there's a little one coming very soon. And she dresses quiet and wears her clothes well; and she speaks quiet too. Of course you learn that in good service, if you take the trouble. She don't speak like a village girl now —or only a very little sometimes. She's kind-hearted too, and that's better than all."

"Has she been to see you lately? Did she know I was coming here to-day?"

But Nanny said she hadn't seen her for some time, and she didn't suppose she knew that Tony was coming. She hadn't been to church for two Sundays. Her time was coming very soon. "If she bears Sir James a son," said the old lady, "I shan't say after all but what it was a good thing he married her. There'll be the old line going on that was coming to an end, and Marches in Merstead the same as there has always been since the beginning of history."

Old Nanny was glad to see Stephen, who was gentle and observant of her, his somewhat awkward manner softening as he walked slowly by her side and bent to her words, so that Tony had an access of liking and admiration for his friend, whom he had not been wont to admire, though his respect for him was always growing.

He was pleased to be introducing Stephen to the place of which he had talked to him so much. There were the old thatched cottages and the elm-bordered lane, the broader road and the rather untidy looking village, which was still picturesque, with its bright little gardens, and

the blazing August sun soaking the lights and shadows of its buildings in colour. There was the high church tower at the end of it, the gate leading to the Rectory garden just beyond, and the big gates of hammered iron which gave access to the park surrounding the Hall to the left of the road, beyond the range of stabling running alongside it. Tony could scarcely believe that he had not seen it for two years, it was all so intimately bound up with his life.

The ten minutes' bell had only just begun to ring, but there was already a trickle of churchgoers on the road, all of whom had a greeting for Tony, which gave him pleasure too, and some pride. He was highly considered in this place, and was glad that Stephen should have the opportunity of seeing it for himself.

They sat in a seat towards the back of the church, one on either side of old Nanny, who was no doubt hugging her own pride and pleasure, of a different nature from Tony's. She had her beloved boy with her, and though she would not have him for long she could think of him as all hers for this little quiet time. She had had his mother sitting by her as a little child in this very place, not much changed from what it had been when she had been brought to it as a child herself. She would come to it every Lord's day, as long as her strength held, for the rest of her life, which could not last for many years longer. The doubts and the difficulties and the sorrows of it were over for her: the weekly churchgoing would be almost the only accent in it during the few quiet years to come, until it should close and she would be brought here for the last time.

CHAPTER VIII

IN CHURCH

It was intensely interesting to Tony to watch the gathering of the people, most of whom he knew so well, in this place which had been a part of his life ever since he could remember. He saw everything now from a slightly different angle. The church itself, of which he had seen no more, sitting Sunday by Sunday in the foremost pew, than the chancel, was something new to him. Its chief feature was a fine hammer-beamed roof, which he saw now, in its general effect, almost for the first time. There had been some alteration in the furnishing of the sanctuary and Communion Table, which took away from the air of a past, or passing, age that they had conveyed before. Tony was inclined to wonder how Sir James had been brought to endorse these changes, for he was aware of him as set against the Catholicizing tendency in the Church of England and although the removal of the book-cushions and the introduction of two brass vases of flowers marked no great advance in this respect, his prejudices were likely to have been aroused. But he remembered now that he had heard from his aunt that the Rector and his wife were in favour with Sir James for having recognized his late marriage socially, which most of his neighbours had refused to do. Perhaps a tacit consent to changes that must have been distasteful to him, slight as they were, had been his *quid pro quo*.

The congregation was noticeably larger than it had been in the later years of the old Rector's ministry. The general decline in churchgoing had hardly yet set in: if such an out-of-the-way spot as this had been affected it had been from other causes, and the decline had evidently been stopped. The greater part of the parishioners were there, and the men were more in evidence than the women, for works of necessity at the close of this churchgoing age were held to include the preparation of the Sunday dinner. But the farmers' wives and their families were there, the labouring men, some of them in clean smocks, the hobbledehoys and the young girls, tending to keep apart in body if not in spirit, and the old people, some of them very old, but not the less interested in their surroundings. For this gathering together of neighbours at a time when they had cast off their daily toil and the dress appropriate to it showed the various grades of the little community in sharper contrast and at the same time made contacts not otherwise or elsewhere known. Somehow Tony himself felt, at the end of that service, that he knew more about the people whom he had had in his view during it than he had known before.

During the filling up of the church the Rector was moving about between the vestry and the reading-desk. He was younger than Tony had imagined, a sturdily built man of about forty, who looked determined and self-reliant. If he and his wife frequented the Hall, in a way that the old Rector and his daughter had not done for years past, it was not likely to be for the sake of the amenities of a great house; and perhaps, after all, he had carried out the few changes that had seemed good

to him in the church because a decision upon such matters lay with him and not with the patron of the living.

It was evidently the Rector's wife who came in a little in advance of the school children, clattering to the benches reserved for them in the choir, and took her seat at the little organ, where Tony's aunt had been accustomed to stumble over the music of the service, not because she liked doing it, or was at all good at it, but because there was no one else to take on the duty, except sometimes Tony himself. Mrs. Gandish was something of a musician, and her opening voluntary brought with it a great sense of relief to Tony's ears, for he had always insensibly nerved himself against his aunt's performance, and had done so now, until the absence of false notes in a piece more difficult than any that Miss Barrett had attempted relieved the tension. She was a good-looking woman, better dressed than his aunt had ever been. Three children, also well dressed, and a girl who behaved like their governess, filed into the Rectory pew. The new Rector must have had private means of his own, for the emoluments of the living, which were nearly all that Tony's grandfather had had to live upon here, would not have supported a family of that appearance.

But it was the Squire's pew, in the chancel, behind the rows of oak benches occupied by the school children, that Tony wanted to see occupied, and presently Sir James March came in, and walked up to it, followed by a young girl whom Tony recognized as Lydia, though her appearance was very different from what it had been when he had last seen her as a small servant in his grandfather's house.

Sir James looked neither to the right nor to the left, but Lydia must have seen Tony the moment she came into the church, for he saw the conscious blush on her cheek as she passed him with a sidelong look, and when she had seated herself by the side of the old man who was so absurdly her brother-in-law, she looked down the church towards him, but without any sign of wishing her look to be taken as a greeting.

She could not have been more than fifteen, for it had been Miss Barrett's way to catch her maids in their childhood, partly for the sake of economy, partly for the sake of training them in the way in which they should go for their own advantage. She had been a pretty child; but pretty children of the village, who are much like children of higher parentage, seldom develop equally with them. Alice had grown into a pretty girl, but at eighteen no one would have mistaken her for anything but what she was by birth. Lydia, as a girl of thirteen in a print frock, with her hair screwed up under a cap, had already begun to lose something. If she had stayed in service until now she would have lost more, for she would not have reached the age at which she would have begun to pick up again in the way of a smart-looking maid.

But the process of deterioration had evidently been arrested. She was very pretty again now, in schoolgirl fashion, with her thick hair, decorated by a great bow, flowing loose under a wide-brimmed flower-decked hat, her tall slim form in a white embroidered frock. She might have been taken for the granddaughter of the old man by whose side she sat and stood. Nobody, looking at them together, could have gained any idea of the history

that had brought them there, or would have thought any explanation of it necessary.

Clothes will do a great deal, and Tony had been prepared for some interesting change in Lydia's appearance. But he had not been prepared for this complete metamorphosis. Probably she hadn't quite got rid of her country speech, and her hands inside the long gloves of white silk might not be the hands of a girl of her apparent class. But there was no flaw in the appearance she now presented, and her demeanour was both modest and assured. If it was an ordeal to her to sit in that seat of honour, in full view of the people who had known her in such different circumstances, and must one and all have been considering and estimating and judging her, she did not show it, unless it was by keeping her eyes away from the body of the church; and she showed no signs of pride or vanity whatever. She must have been taught many things during the two years since she had been taken out of her former state, but nobody could have taught her this essential dignity. It had come from the good blood in her, derived from generations of self-respecting peasant ancestry, and counted for more than she could have learnt of the ways of the class into which she had been absorbed. By the end of the service, during which he had constantly watched her, Tony no longer thought of her as the little servant he had known. She had merged herself.

It was not, however, of Lydia herself that he thought with most interest. How would it be with Alice, whom he had known so much better? He wished he could have seen her there, as he would have done if his visit had

been a few weeks earlier. And yet he wasn't sure that he did wish it. She could hardly have acquired the apparent indifference to the alteration in her state which marked Lydia, and it must have been painful to her to know that he was there, and watching her.

It wasn't, either, of much importance whether or no she had acquired the air of belonging to her new surroundings, since everybody knew all about her, both those from whom she had sprung and those with whom she was now allied. He would much have liked to see her as she was now. The surprising change to be seen in Lydia's appearance must have marked her also, if not to the same degree. But the externals could not be the chief thing in her life, as for the present they were in Lydia's.

He looked closely at old Sir James, who had once come upon him and Alice walking together hand in hand, and had expressed himself upon their innocent but emotional contact with surprising intemperance, which was not so surprising in view of what must already have been in his mind at the time. He had taken some pains afterwards to remove the effects of his outburst, but that was now seen to be because he didn't want it to be known and talked about. It was unlikely that if Tony presented himself at the Hall, as he might even have been expected to do, considering that he had known Sir James all his life, he would get much of a welcome. Knowing the old man, he doubted whether he would be as much as received, and had no intention of risking a rebuff.

He found that his former attitude towards Sir James, half-respectful because of the dignity of his position, so compelling in that place, half-contemptuous because of

his arid, rather mean personality, and because of his advanced age, had developed into a definite dislike, which had in it some of the quality of jealousy. The jealousy was not personal. Whatever effect their incipient mutual attraction, growing from a close temporary companionship between a boy and a girl at an impressionable age, had made upon Alice, it had only been a passing fancy with him, and it would have seemed fantastic to put himself anywhere on the same plane as this old man. It was the factors of his wealth and station that counted for so much more than he had any right to, bringing him something due only to answering youth. He had had so much in his life because of them, surely towards the close of it he could scarcely have been expected to gain this! It was too unfair an advantage.

He didn't look a day older than when Tony had last seen him. None would have credited him with the eighty-one years that were his. He looked an old man, but not a very old man. He was so spare and wiry that the passing years had little effect upon his frame. As for his mind, Tony would have given something to know what was passing in it. It must have taken many new turns of late, but he showed it in no way. There had always been a sort of air of hugging secrets about him, and that air marked him still. It might be said that for years past nobody had known anything about him beyond what all the world might know. Now there was somebody who must know a great deal about him. Was the balance in the bargain that his young wife had made in her favour or against her? Tony would have liked to know that, but supposed he never would.

Tony had many friends to greet outside the church. He put himself into a position in which Sir James, passing down the road, need take no notice of him unless he wanted to. It was his custom to watch everybody out of church before he came down himself. Tony's grandfather had told him that the old way had been for the occupants of the Squire's pew to leave first, while the congregation stood respectfully until the way was clear for them to go out without jostling their betters. But even in such a feudal backwater as Merstead this had begun to show itself as an anachronism, and the present custom had been substituted for it some years before.

Tony was not aware of Sir James having noticed his presence during the service. He had always seemed oblivious to everything but the service itself during its progress, and had seldom so much as cast a look down the church. It was one of the little ways in which, in spite of his very ordinary appearance and manners, he did succeed in preserving the effect of being above the common herd of his tenantry. It was not likely that he had been told that Tony would be there, but he had probably seen him and recognized him as he had gone out with the rest. At any rate, when he came out of church he walked straight to where Tony was standing and without smiling shook hands with him and said: "How do you do? I was sorry to hear of your grandfather's death. I hope Miss Barrett is well."

Tony had no more time than to reply that she was before he moved on. Lydia gave him a shy look as she followed. It was exactly the look she had given him two years before, when on the first day of his holidays, com-

ing down very early in the morning, he had found her scrubbing the oilcloth of the hall, transformed from one of his favourites among the school children into a little servant in his grandfather's house, and wondering how he would take the change. He had taken it rather awkwardly, and he felt awkward in face of her now, but was not put to any test, for she did not offer to shake hands with him, but passed on immediately by the side of the old man.

Sir James's very terse greeting had brought little gratification with it. It might only have been designed to discourage Tony from presenting himself at the Hall, and would certainly have achieved that object if he had had any intention of doing so. But he was pleased when Mrs. Gandish, coming out immediately afterwards, came up to him standing by old Nanny, and said with a smile: "You must be Master Anthony, whom Mrs. Girling has told me so much about—and other people too. I'm sure you would like to see your old home again, and I know my husband would like to make your acquaintance. There's hardly time now, but won't you come, and bring some of your friends, to tea this afternoon?"

Tony was glad to accept this invitation, and went to the Rectory in the afternoon, with Stephen and Duncombe.

The sunny spacious old house, which had been so familiar to him in all its unchanging aspects that it would have been hardly possible to imagine it any different, was changed past belief. There was nothing beyond the ordinary in its furnishing, but it had been painted and papered afresh, and there was much more in it. Everything in the

way of furniture, pictures, hangings, and accessories generally, was better than he had known before. It was like one of the comfortable well-appointed houses at Hilbury, in which life was lived with no obvious necessity for the economy that had always been in the forefront at Merstead Rectory. The economy had been part of the life, and had never affected it in any way that had lessened its attractions to Tony. Indeed, even in this short visit, it stood out in its essential freedom as something to be preferred to the present state of the old house. Sitting in one of the low chairs in Mrs. Gandish's drawing-room, which had been the dining-room in his grandfather's time, nursing his teacup and eating little cakes, he thought of how often he had sat down to the plain fare spread on the big table in this room, and found no improvement in the change.

The garden, to which they repaired afterwards, had received a great deal of attention. The uneven lawn had been levelled for a tennis court; all the grass was beautifully kept and all the flower-beds filled with the "beddings out" which were then the fashion in summer gardening, and provided a bright effect of colour, whatever they might lack in real garden charm. But even here some virtue of the past neglect had departed. Nature, left alone, had given mystery and retirement, and the sense of profuse and careless growth. The sedulous trimming and planting had given something else in their place. Both house and garden were now adapted to a better-endowed life than had been lived in them before. Tony, who took an interest in such matters, had sometimes speculated upon what he would have made of Merstead

Rectory, if it had been his and he had had money to spend upon it. What he would have done would have been little different from what had been done by its present occupants; both house and garden had been much improved. And yet he found himself regretting their old state, which had so impressed itself upon his early years that any change must have deadened the voice with which they spoke to him.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Gandish showed themselves as sensible level-headed people, doing the work they had to do in thorough conscientious fashion, but not treating it as anything more than the work of the day. Mr. Gandish was of like parentage to Tony's grandfather. Both of them came from clerical families, connected with this diocese for two or three generations. But the more lucrative appointments had seemed to come more naturally to the one family than to the other. The Gandishes had done well out of the church, the Barretts had made no more than a decent living from one generation to another. Merstead was not one of the prizes, and it was unlikely that Mr. Gandish would remain in it for the rest of his life. Sir James March had offered him the living because there was no one of whom he had personal knowledge to offer it to, and to find a Gandish to fill it was a safe step to take. Mr. Gandish, after due inspection, had accepted it, because there was a good house and glebe, and it was in what was called a good neighbourhood, which meant that there were big houses within an easy radius, and consequent social advantages to be enjoyed.

It was extraordinary, the difference made by a moderate private income, drawn in this instance from money

saved at one time or another from the emoluments of the church. No Gandish in three generations had risen higher than an honorary canonry; none had superintended a large town parish. But they had held good country livings, sent their sons to good schools and colleges, married their daughters respectably, and taken their part in the life of the land-owning class wherever they had touched it. Of the people other than the Merstead villagers of whom news was given to Tony, he had known some from the neighbouring parsonages and a few of the smaller houses, but scarcely any from the larger ones, which had seemed to belong to a different world altogether. During the latter years of his grandfather's incumbency there had been very little communication between Merstead Rectory and any of the houses around, either small or great; all the life lived in it had been concentrated on the parish and its inhabitants. It was very different now. There were horses and carriages in the Rectory stables, which had been thoroughly repaired, and a yacht lying at Cutting's staith. The Rector had as much shooting as he wanted in the winter, and sailed in most of the regattas held during the summer. And social engagements for him and his wife and children were frequent. Merstead Rectory had seemed very much out of the world, as Tony had known it. Now it was in the thick of everything that went on in its own little corner, and there was coming and going outside it.

Tony had a conversation with the Rector, walking round the garden, which gave him something to think about afterwards. He was a little puzzled about the light in which Mr. Gandish viewed him. It seemed, looking

back, as if he were trying to make up his own mind about him. The new Rector must have known everything about the old one, and about Miss Barrett, that there was to know. They were unmistakably placed as representing the church and its activities in Merstead, admirably representing them, but nothing else. So far as Tony might have been mentioned to them the great majority of the parishioners of Merstead would have spoken of him as belonging exclusively to the Rectory, where he had spent months of every year. But old Nanny would not have seen him exclusively from that angle, and there might have been cross-currents from the Hall. That was what he would have liked to know—how he had appeared in what had been said about him at the Hall; but he didn't like to put any questions that might have elicited the information.

The Rector was quite ready to talk to him about the Hall, and the unusual state of things there. Any idea that the Rectory people would have "sucked-up" to the Hall, in the schoolboy phrase that still represented that attitude to Tony, was finally dissipated by the way Mr. Gandish talked about it. Neither he nor his wife were like that, having their own well-established place in the society around them and having no illusions about bettering it by being on intimate terms with the great house of their parish. Indeed, the Gandishes would have been far more acceptable among their neighbours of Sir James's station than Sir James himself in these days; for he had offended their class instincts by a marriage so much beneath him, and had nothing to give personally that would have made up for it. Mr. Gandish took some credit to

himself, it appeared, for putting himself and his wife on friendly terms of equality with Sir James and his wife, which nobody else had done of all the people whose families had known the Marches for generations back.

"I'm sorry for poor Lady March," he said. "There's a lot of good in her, and she's clever in a way too. If she had married Sir James as a young man—I mean if she had married a young man in that station—she'd have been quite capable of raising herself to fit it."

"I've never seen such a change in any one as in Lydia," said Tony.

"Ah, she was caught young. Lady March hasn't taken to it as she has. She hasn't had the chance, poor girl. Sir James shows himself aware of her lapses, in speech and so on; and of course that worries her, and leads her to make more of them. Still, she's learning all the time. Now she's expecting a child she has something to live for. If it's a boy—well, it's a curious state of things. Sir James can't be expected to live many years longer, and she'll have the bringing up of him. At least I suppose so. I don't know what dispositions he'll make, but he can't very well arrange for the child to be parted from the mother. I can't help wishing that there weren't going to be a child. She'd be free to marry again, somebody more in her own walk in life, and in any case she would be well provided for. If the child lives, whether it's a boy or a girl, this place will come to it, and no doubt it will be brought up here. Otherwise the place goes to a distant cousin. I happen to know that. I'm anxious to keep friends at the Hall. Hardly anybody else will have anything to do with them, you know, and when Sir James

dies, very few people will want to go there. It will be very hard luck on the child. We shall be able to make some sort of link. Otherwise, it's a nuisance. I hate going to the Hall. There's no sort of interest in old Sir James himself, and one always has the feeling that something uncomfortable may happen. He's always watching her, and she can't behave naturally."

"The general idea seems to be that he's kind to her."

"Kind! Oh, I think he is, according to his lights. I dare say they get on very well when they're alone. After all, he isn't a man who wants intellectual companionship. I should say she was quite his equal in that respect. If he had been content just to live quietly with her, for the few years that are left to him! But he seemed to want to get back to everything, almost as if he had been marrying for the second time as a young man, or a middle-aged one, and in his own station in life. Of course it didn't work, and he puts it down to her. He's a stupid old creature really, and never amounted to much, from what I've heard from people about here. Your grandfather never had much to do with him, did he?"

"No. I went to the Hall with him twice, but before that he hadn't been there for years."

"Well, there you are, you see. Used you to shoot there?"

"No. He let the shooting for the last few years. I went out once with the guns when Lord Gunton had it."

"He's going to have it again this season. The old man could hardly beat up enough guns to keep down the birds. It was rather fun for me, because he was always glad for me to get people to shoot there, and I used to ask any-

body I wanted to, almost as if it were my own shoot. However, I'd rather get my shooting in the ordinary way. I'm glad he's letting it again. I think he's accepting the situation more now. It seems a funny thing to say of a man over eighty, but he seems to be settling down. Of course he's very interested in the child that's coming."

CHAPTER IX

STEPHEN AND DUNCOMBE

The week's sailing seemed to be over almost as soon as it was begun. Tony was the only one of the party who had had any experience of this kind of cruising, then in its infancy on those waters as a popular holiday pursuit. He had collected the party, made all the arrangements, and exerted himself throughout to make the cruise a success, in which he was assisted by a week of fine weather. He had proved himself an admirable head and leader of such an enterprise, happy and active and unselfish, and there was not one of his companions, for whom he had provided such pleasure, who did not like him better at the end of the week than at the beginning, except Stephen, whose liking for him was constant.

Stephen and Duncombe had hardly known one another before this expedition, but had come together during the course of it. It was Stephen's first experience of a holiday in which he was responsible for himself, and almost his first experience of being away from parental supervision. Tony, knowing this, and knowing Stephen so well, had watched him closely, and a trifle anxiously, to see how he would get on with the rest, and whether he would make his way among them. All of them were older than he, and those of them who had been at Hilbury School had known him there, if at all, only as somebody who had not yet made any mark in school life. He had all his way to

make with them, and Tony saw him making it by slow degrees, and felt pleasure and pride on behalf of his friend. He was especially glad that Duncombe took to him, which was a sort of *cachet* of his essential "soundness."

Stephen had been awkward and clumsy as a boy, but he was getting rid of his awkwardness, his loosely-knit frame was consolidating, and great strength was coming to him. In his early boyhood, school-fellows of a critical turn in such matters had taken exception to his face, with its long nose and goggly eyes, which he poked here and there with no sense of the absurdity that they saw in them. Certainly he would never be good-looking, but he was growing up to his large nose, and his peculiar way of moving his head about could be accepted as characteristic of him, without arousing that hostility which conventional boyhood opposes to any departure from type. It could be taken now as a queer but not unattractive expression of his alertness of observation. He was interested in everything that came his way, and particularly interested in his fellow creatures. And his interest in them was seen to be of a kindly sympathetic nature, as he became better known. He was without the capacity for self-recommendation which Tony practised because he couldn't help it. He was always himself, and if people didn't like him all he could do was to leave them alone. He had a searching humour which he sometimes pushed beyond limits when he felt himself free from restraint. He had often annoyed Tony by it, and his doubt about him had been whether he would keep it enough in check with his elders, when he came to be received by them on equal terms. But

he kept quiet at first, made himself useful all round, and was soon received into the circle on fraternal terms. Two or three of the others were on vacation from Oxford or Cambridge, and Stephen as a coming freshman was material for their counsel and patronage. In that youthful society, University men were valued as such, and their place was higher than that of those who were in the City. They had more to talk about that was of interest to young men, and even their "shop" was listened to appreciatively. To Tony, who had a sort of nostalgic yearning for University life, and would gladly have given all his future chances in exchange for three years of Oxford or Cambridge, it was mingled pain and pleasure to listen to it. Stephen was exalted in his eyes because he was on the threshold of it, already a member of a College, and with nothing between him and his entrance into those delights but two good months of holiday making. He was taking it all modestly enough, and in his private conversations with Tony did not show himself so beatified at what was coming to him as Tony would have been, or thought he would have been. He was ready to talk about games. St. Hugh's was a small college, and he would stand a good chance of playing both cricket and football for it, but rather thought that he might go in for rowing, about which neither he nor Tony knew anything, except what they had read in novels of University life. He didn't respond much to talk of sociabilities, which interested Tony more than anything. It would be jolly to live with men of his own age, but he would have to be careful about spending money. It was evident that he had no ambition to shine in Undergraduate society, and

was indeed a little afraid of it. What he might have talked about, if Tony had wanted to, was his work; but it was Duncombe to whom he found himself talking about that, and not Tony.

On the day before the party broke up, they came to their quarters for the night at an earlier hour, and Tony, Duncombe and Stephen set out together for a walk. Tony had his sketching apparatus, and soon found what he wanted. The other two stood by him on the river bank for a time, and then left him there, promising to call for him on their way back.

"I've been promised one of those to hang up in my rooms," said Stephen with his side-long grin. "But I don't suppose I shall ever get it, because he always says they're not good enough."

"They're not very good," said Duncombe, "but he seems to get a lot of fun out of it. He's a versatile fellow, with his painting and writing and playing on the pianner. If he'd only stick to one thing!"

"Then he wouldn't get so much fun out of it."

"Perhaps not. And after all I don't know why he should stick to one thing if he does several things pretty well. It's only that it's supposed to be the way to succeed."

"Most of us have to stick to one thing, because there's only one thing we can do."

"That's very true, Stephen Hawthorne. Or say there's one thing we can do best. The thing is to find out what it is. Still, most of us don't get the chance. We just have to make the best of what we're set down to. Witness Herbert Duncombe, the bank clerk. But I don't believe

Tony will ever sit down to the City. He hates it, and he isn't much good at it either."

"Of course he does hate it; but he doesn't grumble—much."

"Yes, he does grumble."

"Well, he sticks to it, anyhow. I wish he could come to Cambridge with me. That's what he'd really like."

"Most of us would like it, I suppose. Why doesn't his brother send him there? He could afford it all right."

"Tony did ask him to, but he said he ought to go into the business. He would only be wasting three years."

"Business men always look upon education as a waste of time, I suppose, because so few of them have any. It's extraordinary how ignorant a lot of them are. I've been quite surprised at some of the men I've come across who have made a lot of money and can hardly write a decent letter. However, I dare say it would be waste of time for Tony, if he has got to be a business man. He'd amuse himself all right, and spend a lot of money. I don't suppose he'd acquire much of the higher education."

But Stephen wouldn't have this, and they wrangled amicably about it. "The fact is," said Duncombe, "that we both love our Tony dearly, but you think of him as a solid person like yourself, and I think of him as a person who puts having a good time above everything."

"I don't think of him as a person like myself," said Stephen. "I haven't got half the brains that he has, or—or—"

"Half the attractions, I suppose you mean. That isn't the question. You've done more with what you have got than he has already. However, we needn't worry our-

selves about him. He'll always enjoy himself, whatever he does. Still, for you and me, and other plodders like us, there's more in it than that, isn't there?"

Duncombe was the only friend Stephen had ever had who talked about life as a serious business, and probably there were very few to whom Duncombe talked as he did to Stephen. Stephen had started it by what he had said of his work at Cambridge. His Scholarship was for classics, and it had always been taken for granted that he would read for the Classical Tripos. Indeed it was doubtful whether he would be allowed to do anything else by the authorities of his college. But his taste was for engineering, and there were opportunities for that at Cambridge, though this was before the days of the Mechanical Science Tripos. From talking over this, they had come to the subject of Stephen's future, and he had told Duncombe more than he had told Tony of what was in his mind, because there were more points of contact in their origins, and it may be said in their outlook.

Duncombe was the son of a parson, and if his bent had been classical he would no doubt have gone from Winchester to Oxford, and might have decided to take Orders. But he had refused to decide while he was still at school, and, although he was reticent about it, Stephen gathered that his so refusing had not been taken well. At any rate, he had lost his chance of Oxford. "I might have done something at Cambridge," he said, "if I'd gone in for mathematics. But it would have been a sort of break away. And I dare say I shouldn't have wanted to go into the Church after all. I wasn't enough up in mathematics

to make it the obvious thing to do. Still, I'm all right where I am. Having been at Winchester, and only just missed Oxford, it made me think, when I found myself a clerk in a bank—all of a sudden, you might say. I wasn't going to leave it at that. It's on the lines that I'm some good at; I've got to make it lead somewhere. I don't know how yet, but I do know that I've got my eyes wider open than any of the others who came in with me, or just before. It's one of the things in which it's no use being as good as the next fellow; you've got to be rather better. That's what I'm trying for all the time, and it makes it all more interesting; for it's pretty deadly compared with what I should have been doing at Oxford."

Stephen's father had also been a clergyman, and a man of some distinction in the extreme Evangelical school. Stephen had had the ideal of following in his footsteps held up before him ever since his childhood, and his mother took it for granted now that he would take Orders, although no stipulation had been made about his going to the University. His stepfather also took it for granted, but Mr. Broadbent's ideas of the Church were not those which his wife had held before her marriage to him. Nor were they those which Stephen held himself. When he found himself able to talk confidentially to Duncombe, he didn't deny himself criticism of his stepfather, though he said nothing that could have reflected upon his mother.

"My father was a very fine man," he said. "I remember him quite well, though I was only six when he died. Of course I could never be what he was, but if I did go into the Church I should want to be as much like him as

I could. I know he wouldn't have wanted me to do it unless I was quite sure that I was—well, you know—called to it, he would have said."

"Yes, I believe that's the only way," said Duncombe. "I'm glad now I didn't take it on. I dare say I should have got a good country living. I should have been something like your friend at Merstead. I thought about it when we were there. A pleasant sort of life enough, when you get older; but well, I thought to myself, 'Anyhow, I'd rather be doing what I'm doing now, for there's something to work up to, which may be better than this.' "

"I shouldn't care for that sort of life at all," said Stephen. "But it's all that Broadbent seems to think about. St. Hugh's has some good livings to give away. He showed them all to me in the Clergy List, and what they were worth, and how old the present Incumbents were."

Duncombe laughed. "They do give themselves away," he said. "Have you made up your mind that you *won't* go into the Church?"

"No, not yet. But I don't want to go through my time at Cambridge without getting something out of it that will help me if I don't. I *have* made up my mind that if I'm not a parson I want to be some sort of an engineer. That's why I shall have to decide one way or the other before long."

"You mean that you'll have to tell them at home."

"Yes, that's just it." Stephen scratched his head, which was a way he had when he was puzzled. "Do you think I might give it a year?" he said.

That he should ask advice at all showed how the friend-

ship between him and Duncombe was deepening. But he did not ask it as if he were in any doubt. "That's what I've thought," he said, without waiting for an answer. "I'll go on doing the best I can with classics for a year. I know I'm not particularly good at them; however hard I worked I couldn't expect to get more than a Second. I shall try to get in a little engineering if I can—I don't know yet whether it's possible. And at the end of my first year, if I don't see my way to the Church I shall say so, and go in for engineering altogether."

"At Cambridge?"

"Yes, if they'll let me go on there. If not I shall have to do it somewhere else."

"It would be hard luck to have to leave Cambridge at the end of your first year."

"I can't help that."

Tony hadn't quite finished his sketch when they got back to him. Duncombe stayed with him, while Stephen went on to where the wherry was lying.

"I'm glad I've got to know Hawthorne," Duncombe said. "He's a good chap."

"I always told you so," said Tony. "I'm awfully glad you've come to like him. I was half afraid you might find him too rough for your cultivated taste."

"Oh, that be hanged! He isn't rough in any way that matters. What's his mother like?"

"I don't care for her much. She was very stiff and strict when I lived with them. She's a bit more genial now she's married old Broadbeans. I suppose she has to be. He's no ancorite."

"Stephen doesn't seem to care for him much."

"I think he's down on him a bit too much. He's been very decent to Stephen, and to Ruth too—that's Stephen's sister. He likes her best, but he's been very decent to Stephen."

"I suppose a fellow's always rather up against his stepfather. Compares him with his own father, perhaps."

"Yes, that's what old Stephen does. His own father was very religious, and Broadbeans isn't, though he's a parson too. I suppose that doesn't count so much when you're a schoolmaster as well. The two things cancel out."

"Will they make a fuss if Stephen doesn't take Orders?"

"Oh, he's been talking to you about that, has he? I thought I was the only person he ever mentioned it to. He keeps things dark. He has always said he was going to make up his own mind about it. He said that before his mother married again, and if he wasn't going to let her decide it for him, he certainly isn't going to let old Broadbeans. I'm sure I don't know how they will take it. It will be rather fun to see."

"It mayn't be altogether fun for him. You know it's rather unusual to find a fellow of his age thinking things out for himself."

"Is it? I didn't know."

"No, you wouldn't. You're lightly built, Anthony Dare. Still, I suppose there must be something in you, or you wouldn't have had Hawthorne for a friend."

"Or Duncombe."

"Or Duncombe, as you say."

CHAPTER X

A SUNDAY ALONE

Duncombe was finishing up his fortnight's holiday at his home, which was on a beautiful part of the Dorsetshire coast. He had asked Tony to go there with him, and Tony had had a severe struggle with himself to refuse. An additional attraction was that Dolly Rashdale was holiday-making with her family at Limmeridge Bay. But Tony had promised to go to his aunt at St. Leonards, and he knew that she wanted him, for she was lonely now that his grandfather was dead. Three weeks were due to him, and he might have put off his visit to her till the third week; but Henry, with the tiresomeness that sometimes overcame him, had decided to take Laura to Switzerland at this particular time, and had said that he and Tony couldn't be away from the office together. Then he had decided to go a week earlier still, but hadn't required Tony to postpone his visit to St. Leonards, which showed that it was all nonsense. But Tony hadn't liked to press for the third week, which he would have to take later. So there it was. He had to adjust his plans to Henry's unreasonableness, and felt slightly vindictive against him because of it. But he couldn't disappoint Aunt Bertha, and Stephen went off with Duncombe instead of him, to the delights of that fair country for which the towniness of St. Leonards was no substitute at this time of the year.

He spent the Sunday at Hilbury, because Henry had

asked him to look in at the office on Monday morning, for which there was no real necessity. But he rather liked the idea of being in the house by himself for a day. He had become attached to it, but although he got on with Henry and Laura very well on the whole, the life that he had to share with them was sometimes irksome, and he had never known what it was to have the house to himself to do exactly what he liked in. Indeed, he had never known that anywhere. He was of a sociable disposition, but had in him a strain of solitariness. It was one of the things that had attracted him so much in University life—that you had your own rooms entirely to yourself to shut yourself up in when you wanted to, and companionship immediately at hand when you were tired of being alone.

A contingent of the Broads party dined in London on Saturday evening and went to "The Gondoliers," the strains of which had run in Tony's head since he had first heard it a few months before. This was in the heyday of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas, when there was always one to be heard at the Savoy, and when that had had its run another to look forward to by the enthusiastic lovers of those skilful magicians, of whom Tony was one. He arrived at "Danefield" after eleven o'clock, having carried his Gladstone bag from the station, and in some doubt as to how he was going to get into the house. Laura had given the maids a holiday, and a charwoman was in possession. He had meant to send her a telegram to say that he should be late, but had forgotten to do so. The independence he enjoyed had not extended to the granting of a latchkey, and he had never asked for one.

He rang and knocked, and knocked and rang, and varied his assaults on bell and knocker by excursions round the house, and after ten minutes or so decided that Mrs. Trimmer must be either deaf or dead or asleep or absent, and he must break in. With the feeling that he might as well do it thoroughly, he hurled his bag through a small window next to the garden door, and after picking out what remained of the glass followed it and went up to bed.

He was awakened next morning at eight o'clock, by the sound of the gong. He went down in his dressing-gown, and found breakfast laid for him in the dining-room. He rang the bell for Mrs. Trimmer, to discuss with her the events of the night before; but she did not answer it. She had cleared away the broken glass, and had evidently accepted it as evidence of his arrival, without further enquiry. He would have to tell her to get the window mended to-morrow, but was glad not to have to bother about it now. If she was of troglodytish habits, that would suit him; for there was already a sense of peace and freedom in having the quiet house entirely to himself.

He thoroughly enjoyed his morning, the greater part of which he spent in his dressing-gown. He went through the score of "The Gondoliers" on the piano, touched up some of the sketches he had made on the Broads, and stretched a large sheet of paper on to a drawing-board, with the idea of painting a real picture from them. He read a little, sitting by the open window of the drawing-room, and when he was dressed, which was not until nearly lunch-time, he sat in the garden and read there.

At one o'clock the gong rang again, and he went in

quickly, so as to speak to Mrs. Trimmer about the window. But she had disappeared again, having left all the materials of his meal on the table. When he went up to his room afterwards he found it tidied and his bed made. It was like being served by invisible genii. By this time he was getting tired of being alone. He had not set eyes on a living soul since the evening before. But as far as he knew there was nobody left in Hilbury whom he could go to see; the August exodus was complete.

He went out for a walk. The road to the Common was crowded enough, as it always was on Sunday afternoon with people coming up from the bottom of the hill for their weekly outing; but they only made him feel more alone. All the houses he passed of people whom he knew were blinded or shuttered. He went to the tennis club, to remind himself of certain diversions that he had enjoyed there during the past few weeks, in which Dolly Rashdale had played her part. The nets had all been removed, and the grass of the courts was worn and brown. It was little more than a week since he had been there last, but it seemed as if it had been in another season, and as if summer had come to an end altogether, though it was a stewing hot day, and only in the middle of August. When all the people whom he knew came back from their holidays, the summer would actually be drawing to a close, and the shadow of its loss inclined him to melancholy.

He sat down on one of the seats and summoned Dolly's face and form to his mind. He had advanced quickly with her since that evening of garden wanderings. He wasn't quite certain whether it was he or she who had set the pace, but he had kept it readily enough. On the

last evening of his meeting her at the Old Hall they had walked in the garden together again, and this time they had not kept in the open, where everybody could see them.

Tony was vaguely dissatisfied with his memories of what had passed between them. He had not had all he wanted from her; she had held him off, at the last moment, though up till then she had seemed to be inviting him on. He had not thought very much about her during the past week. If he had been really in love with her he would hardly have been able to refuse Duncombe's invitation to go where she was. She had pressed him to accept it, which had had the effect of stiffening him not to. It had been a sort of contest between them, who should get the upper hand, and he had seemed to score over her by persisting in his refusal. His doubt now was whether her desire to have him there had been any stronger than his to go. Of course she would have pretended that she didn't care much whether he went or not, just as he had. But if she had really cared, she might not have been able to keep up the affectation of indifference.

Now that he was no longer happy and contented with the full life he had been living, and was reaching out for something to engage his desires, she became of importance again. Duncombe and Stephen would probably have seen her already. Duncombe didn't know her, but Stephen would have made the introduction by this time. He had sent her a message by Stephen, and she would be hearing about him. It pleased him to think that she would be hearing nothing but praise; for he knew that he had increased the popularity that he so much enjoyed, during

the late expedition, and she would have Duncombe's opinion of him, which was bound to make an impression upon her. He had given Duncombe a hint of how it stood between them. Stephen had always snorted at any mention of his love affairs, and shown his most unsympathetic side when their persistence and variety had been brought to his notice. Duncombe didn't seem to be on the lookout for anything of the sort on his own account, but was capable of accepting it as a factor in the traffic of life. "Oh, I'll crack you up to her all right," he had said, in full acceptance of the hint. "But I think you'd much better come down and do it for yourself. There'll be room for you. You've only got to send a wire if you change your mind."

As he sat there by the deserted tennis courts, Tony was strongly tempted to send the wire early the next morning, and to follow it himself. He was deterred as much by the reflection that Dolly would think he couldn't keep away from her as by the promise made to his aunt.

He was now becoming increasingly out of spirits at being entirely alone, and suddenly thought of going into London to see if Mr. Stenning would be available as a companion for the evening. He knew that he wasn't going away until September; it was one of his fads to remain in London during August, which he said was the best month of all there. He walked down the hill and took a bus to the Temple, without going back home.

The outer door of Mr. Stenning's chambers was fast shut, the walks and gardens of the Temple were almost deserted. Tony knew very little of London outside the City, and had hardly a notion of how to employ his

time. It would be too dismal to go back to the solitariness of "Danefield," which he had enjoyed in the morning. He had some tea in a shop in the Strand, and then took an omnibus to Hyde Park, which he had actually never seen, though he had lived all his life within five miles of it, and worked for the last two years within a walk. The West End of London held romance for him, for he thought of it chiefly in terms of Thackeray's novels. It was the scene of a gay and distinguished social life which held great attractions for him. When he was a rich man, a large and beautiful country house would come first, but he also looked forward to taking his part in the intimacies of London life, especially in the "Season." Two years before he had met Roy Carrington, the popular novelist, who had asked him to go to see him in his rooms in the Albany, also redolent of Thackeray. Tony had called on him once, but had found him away. He had left his card, but nothing had come of it. This was the only door at which he had ever knocked in what had always been known to him as the West End.

The slow horse-drawn bus made its way through Trafalgar Square, already familiar to him, into Pall Mall. A friendly but grubby stranger by whom he sat told him that it was Pall Mall, and named some of the clubs to him. He named most of them wrong, but that didn't matter. Tony had his choice of the windows at which Major Pendennis had sat at breakfast, and the steps up which Arthur had proudly passed on his election to the Megatherium. His informant made no mistake about Marlborough House, with the bear-skinned sentries guarding it, nor about St. James's Palace. He was in-

formative and inaccurate about clubs again, going up St. James's Street, but there was actually somebody standing in the bow-window of White's, and it looked to Tony very much like Barnes Newcome, though it was impossible to think of that gentleman being in town at this time of year, or showing himself in public if he were.

Tony knew Piccadilly as far as the Academy; and here was the Albany, but Roy Carrington was no more likely to be in London in August than Barnes Newcome, and it was no use calling on him again. When Devonshire House was pointed out to him, with the information that Berkeley Square lay behind it, he suddenly determined to get off. The grubby man was advancing himself into more intimacy than he wanted, and he wasn't quite sure of being able to shake him off when they arrived at Hyde Park corner; but he also wanted to see if Gunter's was still there, as when the smart world had thronged it for their morning's refreshments.

There it was, and though shut up, and the Square almost deserted, he could almost see the Begum sitting in her chariot eating an ice, with the plane trees as background to her. This was really thrilling. He found his way through the passage to Curzon Street, and so into Shepherd's Market. In one of these diminutive, but smart-looking houses, with the flowers in the window-boxes still blooming, though there was hardly a window of them all that all that was not blinded, the Crawleys must have lived their extravagant life upon nothing a year. One of these shops must certainly have been occupied by the Raggleses, and the rooms over them by Charles Honeyman, and F. B. Outside these modest but comfortable-

looking taverns the tall footmen must have lounged, and discussed the scandals of the great people whom they served. Shepherd's Market was not altogether dead at this time of year, but in the streets beyond it, lined with the tall sober houses, inside of which there was so much life at other times, there was scarcely a footfall except Tony's own. Somehow it was more romantic to have the scene empty like this, for he could people it with the figures of his fancy. And he thought of all the fortunate people who had thronged it a few weeks before enjoying themselves on the moors of Scotland, or on their yachts, or at some gay foreign spa, or perhaps even living quietly in their fine country houses, and envied them all the more for those opportunities. It seemed to him that money could do it all. If only he could make money! He supposed he would by and by, if he stuck to the City, but if he did that, what opportunity would he have of taking part in the life? Henry was making money, but what good did it do him? Tony would much rather have made money as Roy Carrington was making it, by writing novels, which he did in whatever place it suited him to go to, and left himself plenty of time to enjoy all this rich life, of London, and the country, and abroad, that painted itself in such delectable colours. He had never given up the idea of writing novels himself some day, and had once or twice begun upon one, but never with a real story in front of him. He had just written bits of scenes, in imitation of this or that novelist, and had seemed to himself to have written them well. He was inspired now, by the working of his imagination, towards some enterprise of fiction; but it was no more than an inclination to be

writing something, and there was nothing definite that he had it in his mind to write. He was quite sure, however, that some day he would write novels, and that seemed to be enough for the time being.

There were plenty of people in the Park, but they were not the kind of people with which Tony's imagination had connected it. The Row was quite deserted, but it gave him pleasure to recognize it. There was the long stretch of tan, upon which the fortunate ones disported themselves on their sleek-skinned horses, the rails over which the beautifully dressed loungers leant to chat with the equestrians—he knew all this best from Du Maurier's pictures in "Punch"—the little green chairs behind, but most of them now stacked away, because there was nobody left to sit and talk on them.

He went out of the Park and walked along Park Lane, which was not quite as he had imagined it, because of the number of small, or smallish, houses in among the big ones. But how fascinating they were, these bow-windowed balconied little houses with their view on to the trees and grass of the Park, much bigger than they looked, no doubt, and beautifully furnished, if only one could have peeped inside them. He thought of Park Lane more in terms of Miss Braddon and other novelists who drew their characters from high life, than in terms of Thackeray. He pictured these smaller houses full of flowers, and especially of languorously scented lilies, with which the fashionable novelists made great play. But there would be no flowers in them now, and the furniture would be shrouded—that was the word—in

sheets. In the basements the caretakers, like Mrs. Trimmer, would be leading their mole-like lives. No fine equipages rolled along the roadway with their freight of fine ladies, but only the omnibuses full of the common herd of mankind on this fine summer evening, to whom Park Lane meant chiefly the road that ran from Hyde Park Corner to the Marble Arch, or vice versa; for it had not yet become known as the abode of the new millionaire, and was used as a symbol more by the novelists than by the newspapers.

Tony was attracted by the crowd inside the Park at the Marble Arch, and went into it again. Of course! This was where the Hyde Park Orators disported themselves. And here they were, all the cranks of London, enjoying their weekly orgy of oratory and controversy, and providing free entertainment for the good-humoured crowd that listened to them for a time if the entertainment was good enough, and if it wasn't passed on to the next one. Tony spent nearly an hour going from one stand to another. Their variety of subject interested him, and so did the orators themselves, though they were much alike, whether they were upholding orthodox religion, or, as was more frequent, attacking it; whether they were urging their hearers, sometimes with a large policeman standing tolerantly by, to rise in their might and make an end of all existing government, or were proclaiming the essential benevolence of their masters and rulers. They all had one thing in common: the impelling necessity to hear themselves talk; and some of them talked well, and showed agility and resource in answering the

interruptions and objections that came from the crowd. These were the ones who drew, and the applause that greeted a happy hit was incense to them.

Dusk was beginning to fall as Tony tore himself away from this novel form of entertainment, and it was nearly dark when he reached home. As he stood waiting for his ring to be answered, it occurred to him that he would at last see Mrs. Trimmer. She was a long time answering the bell, and he was standing with his back to the door when he heard the latch click. He turned round to find it very slightly ajar, and pushed it open just in time to hear the door behind the staircase swing to. She was scuttling to earth, and he had missed her after all. But she had laid his supper for him. Probably she had also laid his tea, and had cleared it away when it became evident that he was not coming back to it.

He went to bed early, having spent the whole of the day in his own company, and being more than a little tired of it by this time.

The next morning he came down with the full determination of meeting Mrs. Trimmer face to face and having speech with her. He would have to tell her to get the window in the hall mended, and if she didn't answer his ring he would have to go down to her.

But the window was mended already, when or by whom he never discovered, and presently he left the house, without having set eyes upon the mysterious being who had shared it with him and ministered to his needs.

CHAPTER XI

AUNT BERTHA AND AUNT CHARLOTTE

THERE was a sense of home-coming to Tony when he went to his aunt at St. Leonards. He had spent part of every year with her and his grandfather ever since he could remember, and even when his father had been alive, and he had been very happy living with him, and with old Nanny to take care of him, there had been that special kind of pleasure in going to Merstead Rectory, for his aunt gave him something that he hadn't at home. Now it was enhanced, for although he got on well enough with Henry and Laura, and knew that they liked to have him living with them, it was only with his aunt that he felt himself really wanted, and it was only with her that the stability and permanence of things touched his life.

Yet the change that had come to her affected him too, more than he would have thought possible. His grandfather had liked to make a companion of him, in a way that few old men would have cared to do with a boy, for of late especially, he had treated him almost as an equal; but it had been an effort on the part of youth to show response. His grandfather and his aunt together had created for him that sense of home, but his grandfather apart from her had been just a kind old man to whom it was more of a duty than a pleasure to pay the required attentions, his age, in spite of his indulgent attitude,

making him too remote for the distance between them to be bridged.

But it was surprising how much he was missed. Tony had spent Easter with his aunt, but the old man's death had then been too recent for its permanent consequences to have shown themselves. There had even been some interest at least to Tony, in the alterations it had brought about, and Miss Barrett had been much occupied in making the adjustments that had been necessary. But now she had for some time been settled in the every-day life which she would live henceforward without him, and Tony found her saddened by it, though she was as she had always been towards him, and it was not until he had been with her for some hours that he realized how empty life had become for her.

They sat at the open window of her sitting-room after supper, watching the moon shining over the sea, the long row of lights on the pier, and the people passing; and first of all she talked brightly about what Tony had been doing, and what he might do here with the rest of his holiday, but presently slid into talk about her own life, not in the way of complaint, but with the expression of her pleasure in having him there.

"The fact is that I haven't nearly enough to do," she said. "I thought how very fortunate we were when all the rooms were let so easily and I could look after the dear old man just as if we were in this nice house by ourselves, and with no anxiety about keeping it going. Of course we *were* fortunate, and I'm glad that he had it like this as long as he lived. But now! You see, Tony, all I have to do is to order food for poor Mrs.

Craddock, and for the nurses, and see that the servants do their work, which they would do very well without me. Sometimes I wish that I had all my rooms to let, like other women who keep furnished lodgings. I shouldn't make so much money, and I dare say I should have difficulties with my lodgers sometimes. But it would be something to do, and I've always had such a lot to do all my life. Oh, I do miss him, every hour of the day. He was so cheerful, and so good. He never complained even when he was in great pain for the last few days. He only thought of keeping it from me."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. Tony had never seen her cry before, and the sight of her tears moved him. He rose and bent over her with his arm around her shoulder, and kissed her. "Dear Aunt Bertha," he said, "I wish I could be more with you. I like being with you better than with anybody else."

As he spoke the thought crossed his mind that he had considered cancelling this visit altogether, for the sake of being with somebody else. But he meant what he said to her all the same. As far as his thoughts centred around a home they centred around her; and her sadness, which perhaps he alone could comfort now, brought out all that was tender and protective in his manhood.

She soon mastered her weakness. She returned his kiss and dried her eyes, and then patted his hand, to show that she had valued his caress but didn't want more of it. He went back to his seat. "I wish I could stay longer," he said. "But I shall have another week later on, and I'll come down then, if you'll have me."

"Oh, yes," she said. "You know I like nothing bet-

ter than to have you here. I've been making a little plan, Tony. I don't know whether it will be possible for you, and whether it may not be taking you too much away from all your friends and pursuits in London. But would you like to come here from Friday or Saturday till Monday every fortnight? I should like to pay your fare, if you'll let me—all your expenses, I mean, of course. You know that I'm making more money now than I want. It would be a great pleasure to me, and something to look forward to, if you would care to do that."

Tony would have consented at once, if only because of the note of appeal in her voice; but the suggestion greatly attracted him. There was so little change in the texture of his life, and he loved change. And apart from his liking to be with her, he loved this place, which was bright and full of life and movement. It would be just what he would like, to come down to the sea every other week, for a day and sometimes for two days, and he received her proposal with eagerness.

She brightened up at his answering pleasure. "I thought you might like it," she said. "If I hadn't thought so, I think I should have let this floor and contented myself with the room downstairs, which is all I want really. But now I shall keep it, and you must look upon this as your second home, Tony. It has the things in it that you have always known. It *is* something like home to you, isn't it? Your dear grandfather hardly let a day pass without congratulating himself and me upon this room. He had his books round him, and everything that he wanted, and the look-out on to the sea, which

he so much enjoyed. Oh, I'm sure he was happy, for the short time that we were together here. He didn't miss anything by leaving Merstead. I think he gained. It was only in the spring and early summer that he sometimes talked as if he wanted the country, and especially the birds. But he loved the sea, and it made up to him."

Tony was out early the next morning for his swim. It was glorious to be upheld by salt water again and to have the hard sand underfoot. There was promise of a very hot day; he would bathe again later in the morning, and perhaps a third time in the afternoon. He could never have too much of the water, and now he wouldn't be cut off from it for so long at a time. When it became too cold for the sea, there would be the baths to go to. How jolly it would be to be coming down here regularly through the winter. He hated the dark cold days in London, and it was dull in Hilbury too, except for the month or so after Christmas, when the dances were in full swing, and there was skating for those who could spare daylight for it.

He left Aunt Bertha to her household duties after breakfast and went off to see Aunt Charlotte, who was Henry's aunt and not his, but who liked him better than she liked Henry. To go from the sedate dignity of the west end of St. Leonards to the crowded Hastings end of the town was to go from one world to another. Miss Barrett's was one of the few houses in the Marina that was not privately occupied, and many of the others were shut up, just as the large London houses were at this time of the year. The summer visitors seldom came

farther than the St. Leonards pier, except for a walk along the front, but the holiday makers were in full evidence as Tony walked along Eversfield Place.

The seats on the parade were occupied by the husbands and others reading their morning papers; the wives were setting out for their morning on the beach, or already settled there: with their needle-work and their novels, and their little stores of light refreshment, making camps to which the children could return from their excitements and adventures, which would occupy them all the long happy morning. With bare legs and skirts bunched up, the little girls busied themselves with their spades and buckets, while the little boys leaped and stumbled among the rocks farther out, or made occasional excursions to interfere with their sisters, from whom they were driven off with shrill cries by the watchful mothers. The heavy bathing machines were being drawn with creakings and swayings to the far off edge of the sea, ready for the morning's occupation, which had hardly begun yet. The rich householders who fled the scene in summertime had no such enjoyment out of it at any time as these holiday-makers.

But this was the aristocracy of them. The beach beyond the Hastings pier was thick with humanity, swarming from the hive of lodgings of which the old town provided an inexhaustible supply. For them were the Punch and Judy shows, and the cocoanut shies and the hawkers' barrows; and the life was richer altogether. For St. Leonards, though it makes one town with Hastings, is an upstart beside the old port, with the ruins of its Norman castle on the cliff-top, its ancient churches and

houses, and its busy harbour, in which the picturesque fishing fleet has huddled for hundreds of years. Tony always went round by the harbour when he came to see Aunt Charlotte; and he had friends among the fishermen, who lived the life that they had always lived, whether the town was full of visitors or all the cards went back into the windows.

Aunt Charlotte was expecting him, in the old-fashioned house in which she lived in such comfort; for he kept on good terms with her and had written to announce his arrival. She was sitting in the dining-room, which she used as her general sitting-room, with the venetian blinds lowered to keep out the glare, so that he could see nothing at all when he first entered it, but was greeted by her full-flooded speech of welcome, and the kiss on his cheek to which he had long since resigned himself. He had more than resigned himself to the glass of sherry and the slice of cake with which she always regaled him in the morning, and though it was not much past ten o'clock, and she said she was going out and hoped he would come with her, he sat down to it, and she expressed herself willing to join him, for company's sake.

When his eyes had adjusted themselves to the gloom, he saw that she was dressed for out of doors, with a wide-brimmed Leghorn hat on her grey ringleted head, and a flounced cotton dress reminiscent of the days of her girlhood. His spirit blenched at the thought of mixing with her in the summer crowd, but ever since he had made friends with her here nearly three years before he had stiffened himself not to feel ashamed of going about with her. She was such a good sort in spite of her

oddities of appearance, and she had been so kind to him, and had shown herself so proud of going about with him, whatever he might feel about going about with her.

But there was one thing he thought himself justified in guarding against. When he had asked Aunt Bertha about her the evening before, she had laughed and said that Miss Withers had become quite a public character since he had last seen her. There was a new clergyman at the church she attended, and he had set the ladies of his congregation to the good work of distributing tracts among the putative heathen enjoying themselves by the sea. Aunt Charlotte had taken eagerly to the enterprise, and was by far the most successful of the distributors in arousing interest in it. Most of the rest went about it in a shamefaced, not to say furtive, fashion, palming their wares upon such as seemed least likely to object, and scuttling off to avoid anything like question of them. Not so Aunt Charlotte. She would trip up to the most hardened-looking subject, and boldly transfix him with the most potent weapon in her armoury. She had asked that she might be given a quiverful of ammunition against the sin of drunkenness, and had an unerring eye for the outward and visible signs of it. She often proved wrong in her interpretation of them, but was not in the least daunted by the indignation she not seldom aroused. In fact, it was the controversy which followed the delivery of the tract that delighted her. Her quick repartees were greeted with hearty applause from the crowd that never failed to gather round when an argument was in process, and even followed her about to get more of the fun. It was becoming a little of a scandal to the pious ladies who

shared her labours, but in so different a spirit, and Miss Barrett had heard that there was talk of dispensing with her services. "She has always been known as an oddity," Miss Barrett had said, "but really I think she's going too far now. I know she has a heart of gold, and I feel the same about going about with her as you do, Tony. One can put up with the sniggers and the nudges as long as you know that they are only on account of her funny appearance; but I absolutely refuse to go about with her when she's firing off her tracts, and getting up arguments with the most horrible-looking specimens. Whatever she may do, I like to keep myself respectable."

Tony quite agreed with this, and, thus warned, was prepared to tackle the situation firmly. On the table by Aunt Charlotte was a bag to hang upon the arm, and sticking out of it was a large bundle of unmistakable tracts.

"What are those, Aunt Charlotte?" he asked.

"That's my little supply of do-goods, as I call them, Tony dear," she replied at once. "I go out with them every morning at eleven o'clock, and by the time I come back to dinner I've sown the seed far and wide: and I'm sure my appetite is twice what it was because of the good work I've spent my morning in doing. Oh, it's a great thing to do good, Tony dear, and I wish I had taken to it before. I'm thoroughly enjoying it, and my labours have been *blessed*, there's no doubt about that. I'm *proud* of the work I'm doing, Tony dear, and if you'll come out with me after you've rested yourself a little, and perhaps had one more small glass of sherry—well, you'll see for yourself that your old Aunt Charlotte is

doing some good in the world, and I hope you'll be a little proud of *her*, as she has always been of you."

"I know how good you have always been to other people," said Tony. "You've been very kind to me, and I've heard of things you've done down in the town that you've never said anything about yourself."

"Oh, of course, dear, I've always been glad to help friends and neighbours when I've seen the opportunity. That's what everybody ought to do when they have been blest in their comings out and goings in as I have been. But this is doing good on a large scale, and I've no doubt in my own mind—no doubt at all—that dear Mr. Blair was sent here for that very work, which is *wanted*, Tony. Think of all those poor dear nice people eating and drinking and merry-making on the brink of hell, dear. It's very true, what Mr. Blair said himself in a sermon, that there's not much to choose in the sight of the Almighty between Hastings and St. Leonards in holiday time and Sodom and Gomorrah."

Tony laughed at her. "Mr. Blair will be getting into trouble with the Town Council, if he isn't careful," he said. "Where does Mr. Blair come from? That's the name of the man who was at St. John's, Pratts Town, after Mr. Hawthorne."

"Yes, that's him, Tony dear. He comes to tea with me sometimes. He says that he's never eaten such crumpets as mine. Muffins, yes: but not crumpets. If there's not enough butter they're not tasty, and if there's too much you get greasy. Mine are just right. Well, of course it's Mary who does them. I've talked to him about Mr. Hawthorne. He was his curate, and had the greatest possible

admiration for him, though I'm sorry to say he gives a sad account of poor Mrs. Hawthorne with her godless second marriage."

"Yes, that's old Blair all right," said Tony. "You're mistaken in him, Aunt Charlotte. He's an oily old humbug. Even Stephen, who used to stick up for him, says that now. A godless marriage! What cheek! Old Broadbent's a parson, after all, just as he is."

"Oh, but he's not saved, Tony dear. I wouldn't say a word against him, but Mr. Blair says he's not saved. You don't understand these things. I'm sure there's nothing against his *character*—nothing whatever, or a nice woman like Mrs. Hawthorne, though a trifle stiff in manner, wouldn't have married him."

Tony laughed again. "Well, I'm ready to come out with you now, Aunt Charlotte," he said, "if you'll leave the tracts behind. It's either me or the tracts. You can't take both."

She began a voluble protest, which was interrupted by the entry of her servant with a note.

"Ah, this is dear Mr. Blair's writing," she said. "An answer, Mary? Oh, no answer. It will be about some little thing he wants me to do for him. You'll see, Tony dear, that it will be impossible for me to give up . . ." She came to a sudden stop, and her eyes stiffened themselves upon the letter she was reading. "Never!" she rapped out, with an angry shake of her ringleted head, and said it twice more, with increased determination, before she came to the end of it.

She threw the letter on to the table, and took up her bag. "I shall remain a soldier until the end," she said.

"No power on earth shall dismiss me. Come, Tony! Let us go forth together to the good work."

"I suppose he wants you to give it up," Tony said.

"It is the mean jealousy of my fellow-workers," said Aunt Charlotte, bridling and bristling. "I have been more successful than they have, and he ought to know it. He *does* know it, Tony. Oh, it cuts me to the heart to be treated like this."

She grew very red, and looked as if she were going to cry. "May I see the letter?" Tony asked, in a matter-of-fact voice which brought her to herself.

"It is the grossest ingratitude," she said, handing it to him. "But I can't blame Mr. Blair. You will see that he is kindness itself. The last thing he wishes is to break off relations with me. He says so; and yet I am to give up the work that I can do best. Oh, it is *too* much."

"Of course he doesn't want to break off with you," Tony said, throwing the letter on to the table. "I wonder you don't see what a wily old humbug he is, Aunt Charlotte. All soft sawder, but hasn't the pluck to say straight out what he means."

Her attitude suddenly changed, whether she was influenced by Tony's opinion, or had come by sudden light of her own. "He shall have his tracts back," she said. "Yes, he shall have them back, every one, as he wishes. If I cannot serve under him as a regular soldier, I shall be a volunteer. I shall buy my *own* tracts, Tony; and then we shall see who comes off best in the fight, Mr. Blair with his army of shirkers, or your Aunt Charlotte, alone and undaunted."

"Well, let's go out now," said Tony, relieved that the

outing would be tractless, at least on this occasion. Perhaps he would be able to influence her to give up her resolution to take single action, though he felt half-inclined to back her up in it, for the pluck she had shown.

He wanted her to walk in the Gardens, but she had her shopping to do in the town, and he could see that she wanted to get among the crowd too, though deprived of her ammunition. So he set out with her, wondering what was going to happen.

It was not long before he realized what a public character she had become. She had always attracted remark, for her odd appearance, and her five wheezy pugs, all but one of which were now dead, and that one disinclined for walking exercise; but there had been some attempt to conceal the remark from her. Now she was greeted with broad smiles, and not a few encouraging speeches. These were good-natured enough for the most part, but caused Tony intense discomfort, for they were not respectful, and yet it was out of his power to resent them.

"Now then, old gel, tip us a hot un. Where's your reticule?"

A beery-looking person in a frock coat, dirty straw hat, and flannel trousers, thus addressed Aunt Charlotte, standing directly in their path. This was too much for Tony, and he was about to express himself vigorously: but she was too quick for him. "I've left it at home this morning," she said, "and that's more than you'll ever do with your red nose, my man, till you get rid of your bad habits."

Tony had the sense to realize that it was useless for him to look about him with a black threatening face,

which had already brought remark upon him. Much better take it as Aunt Charlotte did. She was quite capable of defending herself, and it was after all more his own dignity than hers to which he felt the affront. The poor old thing had hoped that he would be proud of her. Good Lord! Because of the exhibition that she was making of herself! But when he had put himself mentally on her side he saw that she was not without dignity of her own to support her, though it was of a queer kind. And probably the crowd itself would have objected to anything like intentional rudeness. She was a highly popular figure. And really the old thing was as sharp as a needle. Nobody could get the better of her.

All of a sudden, her perky satisfied manner changed. She darted towards a meagre-looking lady who was walking along in front of her, offering tracts right and left, but hardly giving anybody time to accept them. "Good *morning*, Mrs. Belfoy," she said in a voice of sharp irony. "I suppose I've to thank *you* among others for being stopped doing the good work. A nice seed-sower *you* are, ma'am, to object to—"

She stopped as suddenly as she had begun, and drew back, while the other lady hurried on at an increased pace. "I mustn't make a scene here," she said to Tony; and from that moment her attitude of inviting attack left her. She walked on by Tony's side, silent for a time, and it was extraordinary how soon the sort of notice she had been attracting fell away. When they got on to the parade, by the Baths, it almost disappeared, and presently she took Tony's arm, and asked him to walk a little slower.

Her hand was trembling, and looking down on her face he saw that it was white. They were passing a stand of open carriages, and Tony had a sudden inspiration. "We'll go and see Aunt Bertha," he said.

She made no objection, and they drove off. She passed her handkerchief across her eyes. "How could I do such a thing!" she said in a low voice. "I'm not worthy to be counted one of the army."

Another silence, and then she addressed Tony in her ordinary voice, with a sprightly question about the state of his finances. "There's a little something for you at home, which I forgot to give you this morning," she said. "Better at the beginning of a holiday than at the end, I always say. And you don't mind taking it from your old Aunt, do you, dear? though you *are* so grown-up and manly-looking now."

She never referred to her tract-distributing experience again. Tony would have liked to know what was passing in her queer old mind about it, but couldn't ask her. Miss Barrett told him some time later that she had given up going to Mr. Blair's church, and that Mr. Blair was becoming known in the town as "the old ladies' pet," or alternatively as "the Crumpeteer." Tony sometimes wondered whether Aunt Charlotte had had anything to do with these nicknames; but she never used them herself.

CHAPTER XII

DISTURBANCE

Looking back in after years upon the months of autumn and winter which followed, Tony was always a little puzzled at the mark they had left upon his memory. He was made very unhappy, and yet his thoughts of them were half-regretful. The sudden exhilarating change which came to him in the spring perhaps cast its light back upon them, though it might rather have been expected to throw them into darker relief. There was an intellectual life of discovery and appreciation going on in him all the time, but it no more than tempered the unhappiness, which in its turn affected everything that he might otherwise have enjoyed to the full. No, it was the unhappiness itself, or the cause of it, that threw a glamour over the memory of that season. Perhaps it was because he had felt deeply, for the first time; for strong emotion colours everything, not always with its own quality, either of gladness or sorrow.

Love had come to him, by one of the many paths taken by that disturbing urchin. There was much in the mental and moral make-up of our friend which might have responded to an impulse that could only have raised and strengthened him. He had it in him to revere womanhood, to pursue a courtship that would "persuade the soul from height to height" to its happy God-sent end. But

he was caught in a coarser net. He had played with Cupid since his boyhood, and Cupid had played with him, giving him pricks from his lightest darts, tipped with no poison, which he had only welcomed. Now he was transfixed, and the arrow was barbed with jealousy, one of the most searching and subtle of venoms.

It is certain that when Tony came back from St. Leonards he was not in love with Dolly Rashdale in any way to disturb his self-possession. His feeling for her was not very different from what it had been during their youthful flirtation; and they had both of them got over that. Under the same circumstances the warmed-up affair would have come to an end in the same way, even though it had been raised to a higher temperature than before.

But on the first evening of his return he went to see Duncombe, and came away from him with an uneasy feeling that Duncombe had been poaching on his preserves.

Duncombe had been perfectly frank about it, or had appeared to be so. He said that Tony hadn't told him half enough about Dolly, who was much prettier than he had had any idea of, and a delightful person to spend a holiday with. She had already made friends with his sisters when he arrived, and during the past week she and they and Stephen and he had done everything together. He had never had such a jolly week at home before, and it was largely owing to her. It would have been better still if Tony had been there, he was kind enough to say; but they had got on very well without him.

There was nothing to take exception to in this, except that Duncombe said nothing about the praise he had

undertaken to administer to her of Tony, and when Tony fished for some mention of himself by her Duncombe had little satisfaction to give him. She had certainly sent him no message, either by Duncombe or by Stephen, whom he asked later. Duncombe must surely have remembered that Tony had given him to understand that he had some claim upon Dolly; but if he did, he ignored it. He seemed to want *not* to acknowledge any tie between her and Tony, except that of an old friendship. It was not so clear, however, whether he acknowledged any closer tie on his own account. A large photograph of her stood smiling on his mantelpiece. She had always refused to give Tony one, but he had taken the refusal as only play; she would have given him one sooner or later. Evidently there had come to be a tremendous friendship; but Duncombe claimed no more. He talked of her as if he were heart-whole, and didn't talk of her all the time. It was just this real or apparent indifference that piqued Tony when he had left him, and was walking home in considerable discomfort of mind.

The discomfort lasted until the Rashdales returned to Hilbury, and then it increased to strong mortification. Dolly had thrown him over, and made no disguise of it. Nor did she disguise her flame for Duncombe. Knowing her as well as he did, Tony was sure that whatever Duncombe's feelings towards her may have been, hers towards him were not those of mere friendship. Dolly had also been playing with Cupid's darts, and was now pierced by one.

No doubt it was the wound to his vanity that first set Tony on fire to get back what had been his; but he soon

came to desire it ardently for itself. The more she retreated the more he pursued, until at last there was a scene of recrimination. Why must he keep on worrying her? Surely he could see that she didn't want him always hanging about her! Would he kindly leave her alone? She showed herself for what she was, if he could only have seen it—careless of the feelings of others and bent only upon her own pursuit, which she took no trouble to hide. It was extraordinary that so beautiful a girl should make herself so cheap. But she was not cheap to Tony, she was unattainable, though he wouldn't believe it, and drew back after this rebuff only to take up the pursuit again when she seemed to have recovered her liking for him. She did like him, if only he wouldn't get in her way, and the first sign of relenting was accepted by him with sweet tremors, as meaning that she was coming round to him at last. He was more wary after that, and because he gave no occasion for a second outbreak, and was accorded some poor favours of smiles and friendly words, thought he was making his way with her again, and when she was tired of her infatuation for Duncombe, who took it all very coolly and was no more in love with her than she was with Tony, she would come back to him.

It was a miserable kind of fever. His love had nothing to feed on except the memory of what had been between them and the deceptions he imposed upon himself; but it grew rankly. He thought of her all day, and awoke at night to think of her. Everything he read ministered to his passion, and especially the poetry of love, all of which seemed applicable to himself.

"Maud" was his favourite reading at this time, and

he repeated passages of it to himself at all times and in all places. Many years afterwards he was walking down a narrow crowded lane in the City thinking only about some business he had come there to do, when suddenly there came into his head words which he had neither read nor repeated to himself for almost as long.

> All night have the roses heard
> The flute, violin, bassoon;
> All night has the casement jessamine stirred
> To the dancers dancing in tune.

He was strangely moved to recall the feeling with which he had said those words over to himself walking down this very lane after a dance at which Dolly had been kind to him.

> She came to the village church,
> And sat by a pillar alone;
> An angel watching an urn
> Wept over her carved in stone;
> And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
> And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
> To find they were met by my own.

Poor Tony, in church, with his love-sick eyes fixed upon Dolly's undoubtedly well-drawn profile, where she sat or stood in a side aisle, had intercepted a look which was probably intended for somebody else, though the blush which followed it might have been charged to his account; and Tennyson's lines rang in his head for days afterwards.

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour!
O Maud were sure of heaven
If lowliness could save her.

That was when raging at her cold-shouldering of him, he had skated by her several times without taking any notice of her, and she had come up to him with a smile, her pretty face framed in its furs, slipped her hand into his and asked him to take her round, and been very nice with him, Duncombe being engaged elsewhere.

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
. . . . . .
But now by this my love has closed her sight
And given false death her hand and stol'n away
To dreamful wastes . . .

That was when he was leaning out of his window, on a starry winter night at St. Leonards, chilled in body but warmed in soul by the thought of her.

There is none like her, none.

He endowed her with all the virtues, this shallow man-hunting girl with her pretty face and graceful figure, and his love was not all folly and self-indulgence. He thrilled to nobler strains than those of "Maud," and contrived to fit into them Dolly Rashdale, who, perhaps, was going through something of the same sort of experience herself, or its feminine counterpart.

For Duncombe was something of an enigma. Far from shunning his society, Tony sought it during those months. Duncombe was nearest the rose of anybody, and there was some food for encouragement in finding him not at all overcome by the favours so lavishly granted him. Tony would joke to him miserably about Dolly's infatuation for him, which was plain to everybody. With the myopia induced by his state, he thought his own infatuation well concealed. To Duncombe he advanced himself as the rather cynical observer, half contemptuous of Dolly, though frankly acknowledging her personal attractions, and indeed more than willing to dwell upon them. Duncombe did not prick this bubble; nor did he seem to be pretending anything on his own account. He would never admit a more than friendly interest in Dolly, but neither did he deny anything. He kept her photograph in a prominent place, and avoided no opportunity of meeting her.

Tony went back to the City no more enamoured of his work than before, though the prospect of increased emoluments somewhat excited him. But the new Agency had not come into being yet, and his work on it would not begin until Fred Hopwood returned from his holiday, about the middle of September. What was happening in the office was that Henry was busying himself about getting exactly the right man for his secretary. He had come back from his own holiday full of bustle and energy, and it seemed to Tony that he was uncommonly glad to have it over. Laura talked exhaustively, and exhaustingly, about it. She had brought back innumerable photographs, which she showed to Tony, explaining each one

in minutest detail, till his stock of politeness was reduced to a mere nothing, and he had hard work to keep from yawning in her face, or seizing the whole pack and throwing them into the fire.

"Now just up there, behind that house with the balcony—no, I'm not quite sure that it wasn't behind this one a little farther up—was a very nice café, where Henry had a glass of beer, and I ordered an ice." That was the sort of thing he had to listen to evening after evening, until the pack was exhausted. Laura was pleased to have been abroad for the first time in her life, and evidently imagined herself to have acquired a subject of conversation which would support her when conversation was expected of her; but it was doubtful if she had really enjoyed herself more than Henry. She often said how glad she was to be back in her nice clean home, and how much better English food was than foreign food, whatever people might say. It seemed to Tony that this holiday of theirs, spent entirely together, had set them farther apart. Henry's satisfaction at being home again meant more than that he had come back to something definite to do which he liked doing. Tony himself would have been bored to death with Laura's undiluted company on a journey of sight-seeing. Was Henry getting bored with her, after twelve years of married life? It was beginning to look like it. He talked little of their holiday experiences, and showed no interest in her pictorial and topographical exhibitions, but took up his book when she began on them. He started his evening's reading very soon after dinner now, and showed some impatience when she interrupted him with a question. He also showed undoubted relief

when she went up to bed, which she did at ten o'clock, or soon after. He didn't show it to her, but Tony knew by the way he settled himself again in his chair that he was glad to be released from the necessity of talking to her, though he sometimes talked to Tony after she had gone upstairs.

Well, it was a sad thing if it was so, and showed how necessary it was to marry the right person, so that that deadly blight of indifference should be escaped in middle-age. How different it would be with him and Dolly, if . . . But Tony never advanced farther than a mental picture of himself and Dolly newly married, spending blissful evenings together. He never pictured her to himself at the age of Laura.

A series of applicants for the post Henry had to offer passed through the office. He seemed to enjoy putting them through their paces, and Tony could hear his sharp and businesslike questions through the partition, and tried to judge, by the tone of their replies and the sight he had already had of them, whether he would like them as future companions. As Henry had made the stipulation in his advertisement, "some business experience essential," the field was more limited than it might otherwise have been; but there were one or two University men among the candidates, and Tony hoped that it would be that sort of young man whom Henry would choose. But his choice finally fell upon Mr. Beck, who was engaged one day and began work the next.

Henry had probably chosen well, for if the ideal secretary is one who has more of the qualities of a machine than of a human being, Mr. Beck must have been as near to

the ideal as was obtainable. His appearance, his dress, his speech, his manners, were all colourless. He seemed to exist for his work alone. He had his table in Henry's room, and was always busy at it, whether Henry was there or not. He never came into the outer office except to ask a question or to get something done. Tony took the opportunity of Henry's absence, on the first day, to stroll into his room and address a few friendly words to the newcomer. But though his overtures were received with the respect due to a brother of Mr. Beck's principal, they were not responded to. The secretary seemed anxious to get on with his work. Even Mr. Richards made humorous remark upon his lack of geniality, but did not try to overcome it. At the end of a week he was still a complete stranger. Tony didn't even know where he lived, or whether he was married or single, which to a person of his embracing interest in all that concerned his fellow-creatures was a deprivation. Henry didn't know much about him either, and said that the less he had to do with the private lives of his employés the better he was likely to be served. He congratulated himself heartily upon his secretary, who attended him like a shadow, missed nothing, and reminded him of everything that he needed to be reminded of. His work was enormously lightened, for he could devote himself to the big things and not have the burden of the small ones always on his mind. He paid Beck a handsome salary, and didn't mind telling them at home, though he asked that it shouldn't be repeated outside, that it would be worth his while to pay double as much for such a treasure. He didn't mention what the salary was, but Tony found it to be £500

a year, which caused him to open his eyes. It was as much as Mr. Richards drew, which perhaps accounted for a drop in the quality of his cheerfulness that was to be remarked about this time. But in this as in other things, Henry's ideas were expanding. Probably a sense of values is at the bottom of all commercial success, and he had not grudged a high price for an exceptional article.

Beck was colourless in externals, and was content in his work to be the shadow of Henry; but a man with his ability was not likely to be without character, and it was not long before one of the features of his make-up showed itself, to the disturbance of all concerned.

Perhaps it was the necessity he was under of subordinating himself during the greater part of his working hours that pushed him to the opposite extreme when he dealt with others than his chief. His manner was never otherwise than quiet, and, where respect was required, respectful, but underneath it there gradually showed a ruthless determination to make himself felt, and, it seemed, to be feared.

He began upon Petherick, who was an easy mark, for he was idle and untrustworthy, and inclined to be impudent too. Beck soon cured him of that. He was at him constantly, with gnat-like persistence, and a cold disagreeableness of speech which soon brought the poor weak youth to such a state of self-distrust that he never knew whether he was doing a thing right or not. Tony had not yet come under the harrow, and was not inclined to overmuch sympathy with him; but he began to dislike Beck for the tone he used towards one who was so much

in his power, as well as for the total absence of friendly feeling towards his equals in the office. He said something about it to Henry at home; but Henry was in the full flush of satisfaction at having secured such a lieutenant, and would hear nothing against him. It was his duty to look after his employer's interests, and Petherick was a lazy young rascal, who wanted keeping up to his work.

Then came the turn of poor old Benson, who was as honest and reliable a servant as any man could hope to have, but slow in the working of his brain, and easily put off his stride if he was hurried over any explanation he had to give, or debarred from discussing an explanation given to him. Beck never gave him time for anything, and showed such ingenuity, as it seemed to Tony, in *not* making things plain to him, while pretending to do so, that presently Benson made a big mistake, and the first engagement was fought in a battle that was waged as long as Beck remained in the office.

Benson was called in. Tony heard it all through the partition, and so did Mr. Richards, who was engaged with his ledgers.

"Well, Mr. Henry, I didn't understand it to begin with, and Mr. Beck was in such a hurry that I couldn't get it explained." Old Benson began very well, and if he had kept to that statement and repeated it he might have come off best. But he was soon involving himself in a long-winded account of exactly how he *had* acted under the circumstances, and Henry began to show impatience, while Beck simply repeated the straightforward instructions which he said he had given. Tony was sure that he had not given them in that way, but by this time Benson

was too muddled to say so on his own account. Henry wasn't hard on him, and told Beck that he must see that any instructions he had to pass on to him in the future were thoroughly understood. But this reflected more upon Benson than upon Beck, and poor old Benson came out and climbed on to his stool without a word, not disgraced, but certainly humiliated. Tony felt immensely sorry for him, and took him out for a cup of tea later in the afternoon, partly with the idea of showing him a kindness, partly to get his opinion of Beck.

But Benson didn't give him much satisfaction. He had had his rebuke, and wanted to forget it. His nature was too clean to harbour resentment, and it was doubtful if he saw, as Tony did, that Beck would rather make trouble than save it. His loyalty to Henry touched Tony afresh. It had something of the quality if the feudal spirit, which Benson had inherited from generations looking up to those set in authority as of different clay from themselves. "I shouldn't like Mr. Henry to think I wasn't doing my best," he said. "It's getting on for five and twenty years since I first came to your father, Mr. Anthony, and I should wish to give Mr. Henry the same kind of service as I gave him."

Tony spoke to Henry with indignation that evening, and Henry didn't show himself quite so satisfied this time. "It's nonsense to say that Beck wanted to get him into a row," he said. "He's so devoted to my interests that perhaps he's a little over anxious to have nothing go wrong. And of course Benson's slow, poor old fellow! I'll tell Beck to go easy with him. But look here, Tony, don't you try to make a breach in the office. You've got

your knife into Beck for some reason or other, but I don't want the others set against him. There has always been such a good feeling in our office, and I want it to continue."

"Well, it won't continue long if you encourage Beck to go nosing and bullying round everywhere," said Tony. "He's making himself a positive scourge."

Henry must have said a word to Beck, for whenever he had to deal with Benson afterwards he was offensively patient, and more detailed in his instructions than was necessary even with Benson. He showed a contempt for him which was more offensive than his former attitude; but it was a subtle flavour of disquiet and unpleasantness that he spread about him rather than anything that could be taken hold of and objected to.

Up till now he had treated Mr. Richards with almost exaggerated respect, as head of the office, under Henry alone. There would have been small chance of his dealing with him as he had dealt with Benson, for Henry's instructions were always given to Mr. Richards direct. And yet a sense of friction had been created, it was difficult to tell how. Mr. Richards took it all with the unchanging equanimity that was part of his character, but he had left off humming to himself over his work, as his way had been. Tony gained the idea that there was disturbance of mind beneath his composure.

The big engagement came on suddenly, just before Christmas, and did something to distract Tony's mind from the jealous love-sick gloom that was then lying heavy upon him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ENGAGEMENT

The usual conference over the morning's mail was going on in Henry's room. Tony wasn't listening to it. His desk was just on the other side of the partition. Everything spoken in an ordinary voice could be heard, but the sound was just enough deadened to make it easy to ignore what was being said. Henry and Mr. Richards did most of the talking, and Beck's quick low speech came in occasionally.

Suddenly Tony's ears were arrested by a speech from Mr. Richards. "This is a good opportunity of saying, sir, that in a matter of this sort I don't care about taking instructions from Mr. Beck. If you and I don't agree on a point we can discuss it, and of course you will have your own way. But where there has been no discussion it is for me to take my own line, as I always have done, both with your father and you."

He spoke in his ordinary pleasant voice, but just a trifle raised. Tony could see him, as if he had been before his eyes, standing easily, one hand holding the lapel of his coat, the other handling the bunch of keys in his trousers pocket.

There was a slight pause, as of consternation, and Tony experienced a sudden strong sense of drama. Mr. Richards had always fitted so perfectly into the office

scheme, both under Henry and his father, that a protest of this sort from him had an effect the latencies of which could not be gauged. It must have struck Henry with surprise, for he had not spoken when Beck broke into a flood of speech, in so low a voice that Tony could not catch it all. But he seemed to be protesting at the same time that he should never think of giving Mr. Richards instructions on his own account, and explaining what he had understood Henry's wishes to be, which he had simply passed on.

Then Henry spoke, half-apologetically, as it seemed, and Tony hugged himself to find that it was Mr. Richards who had rightly interpreted his wishes in the matter under discussion, and not Beck. Clever Mr. Richards, to wait for such an advantage as that before he gave battle!

"Well, of course, sir," he said, waving this point aside as immaterial, "there was no difficulty here, and I have been deciding questions of this sort without troubling you or your father for the last twenty years and more. What I want to say is that I can't have Mr. Beck questioning my decisions on his own account, and . . ."

Another flood of protest from Beck, who seemed to be getting nervous. He again disclaimed want of respect for Mr. Richards, and said that he had been anxious to understand this particular point, which might arise again, and had only gone to Mr. Richards for an explanation.

"Which I was quite ready to give you," Mr. Richards took him up in the same even voice. "And you immediately queried it, Mr. Beck. You didn't think that was what Mr. Henry meant, and practically ordered me to

hold it up until you had consulted him. You'll see, sir, that business can't be done in that way; at least it can't be done by me. If I no longer hold the position here that I have held, I must know where I stand, and take steps accordingly."

This was a threat of resignation. Mr. Richards was ready to go to all lengths to rid himself of Beck's interference, and that he should have contemplated cutting himself loose from a position in which he had seemed to be established for life showed how intolerable he had found it.

"Oh, of course you're quite right, Mr. Richards," Henry said. "You've gone beyond your duties altogether, Beck. When I'm not here it is from Mr. Richards you will take your orders, and you will please treat him exactly as you do me. I know Mr. Richards wouldn't complain in this way unless he had just cause. Don't let it occur again; or anything like it."

Beck murmured acquiescence, and Tony thought the scene was over. But Mr. Richards spoke again. "Well, of course, sir, that's easily settled," he said. "I knew I had only to speak, when the time came, to have an understanding as far as I was concerned, and I'm sure I shan't have to speak again. But I should like to say that Mr. Beck isn't making the work of the office any easier in other ways. I have always been considered the head of it. I don't object to instructions being given direct from you, naturally, and through Mr. Beck, if you choose. But his way of giving them isn't the right way. It isn't the right way, and it isn't meant to be; it isn't *meant* to be, Mr. Henry. Now take Benson!"

Mr. Richards was warming up. Tony had never heard him speak in that tone before. But unfortunately at this point Henry interrupted him. "Tony!" he called. "I want you a minute."

Tony thought he was being invited to take part in the discussion; but it seemed that Henry only wanted him to go round to—it didn't matter where; he was to be got out of the way.

Neither Benson nor Petherick was in the office. Mr. Richards had sent them both on an errand, and Tony realized for the first time that he had picked his opportunity, and meant to make a thorough job of it. It was annoying of Henry to deprive him of the pleasure of seeing the engagement through, but perhaps, as Mr. Richards had been prepared to carry it on with him as a listener, he would not object to recounting its conclusion to him later. It pleased him, as he went about the unnecessary errand on which Henry had sent him, to reflect that Mr. Richards was even now doing battle on behalf of old Benson, and perhaps of the unhappy Petherick. He wondered whether his own name would be mentioned; but Beck had so far left him alone. It had been an easy task for Mr. Richards to get his own grievance settled, but he had not been content with that. Tony was sure that it was not only because Beck had come across his authority in the office that he was making further objection to his methods.

When Tony returned to the office, the conference was still going on in Henry's room, but it had returned to the ordinary business of the day. Henry was a little more decisive in speech than usual, Mr. Richards a little more

easy in his attitude, Beck a little more sedulously applying himself to miss nothing of what was being said. The engagement was over, and Mr. Richards had won it handsomely.

He displayed no triumph, and would say no more to Tony than that Beck had been too zealous, but no doubt things would go better now. It was from Henry that Tony received the further information that he wanted.

Although Henry was dictatorial towards Tony in the office, and had to be treated by him as if there were no relationship between them, when they were at home Tony could say anything to him that he liked, even about what went on in the office.

"I was sorry you had to send me out this morning just when the row between Mr. Richards and Beck was becoming interesting," he said with ironic intention, after Laura had left them alone that evening. "I hope you gave it him in the neck. He thoroughly deserves it."

Henry laid down his book. "It's a great nuisance altogether," he said. "But I didn't know it had gone as far as it has. Why didn't you tell me?"

Tony laughed. "Why didn't I tell you?" he echoed. "I did tell you, and you wouldn't have a word of it. You said I had my knife into Beck, and wasn't to make a breach in the office."

"There's a pretty big breach," Henry said ruefully. "I must say, in fairness to you, Tony, that you gauged that side of Beck better than I did. He's so extraordinarily good at my work that I shut my eyes to any deficiency in him. I suppose every man has a deficiency somewhere, and Beck's seems to be that he always upsets

the people he has to work with. That's why he left his last place. I've found that out now. One thing I won't stand is his rattling old Benson. I told him that before, but he seems just to have changed his way of doing it."

"He's perfectly poisonous," said Tony. "I'm glad Mr. Richards spoke up for old Benson as well as for himself."

"It was quite a surprise to me that he had tried it on with Mr. Richards. I thought I had been careful not to give him the opportunity. Mr. Richards took it very well. I wouldn't have him put out for anything. I told Beck, afterwards, that if it came to choosing between him and Mr. Richards it would be he that would have to go. But of course I don't want to lose Beck; he's far too valuable to me. So I told him that if I had to get rid of him because he made trouble with the staff, I shouldn't recommend him anywhere without mentioning it, and that I knew he had already lost one place on that account. So I think he'll be careful for the future. And you had better let me know how it goes, Tony, and whether there's anything still to complain of."

"Oh, I'll do that all right," said Tony. "I dare say he'll try his hand on me next."

"Well, I shouldn't be inclined to blame him for that," said Henry, returning to his book.

Beck seemed to have turned over a new leaf altogether, and his manner towards those whom he had treated as his subordinates was unexceptionable, while towards Mr. Richards it was almost more respectful than towards Henry himself. But it was a cold sort of respect. Beck didn't seem to want to ingratiate himself, and remained

as much outside the normal friendliness of the office as before.

Early in the new year, when Tony's mood was at its blackest, because Dolly was putting him under the harrow just then, he was roused out of himself by having to do something on behalf of somebody else.

Petherick came to him with a white face, and told him that he had been taking the stamp money, which was in his charge, and couldn't replace it. It was less than a sovereign that he had taken, and he had expected to win a sovereign from a surreptitious sweep on a billiard tournament in which he had been playing at his Church Lads' Club. He had lost, unexpectedly, the night before, and had not been able to borrow the money to conceal his defalcations, which would have to come out that afternoon, before post-time.

Tony wouldn't promise to say nothing about it. He said he must think it over, but he would lend him the money in the meantime, if he would promise to play the game in future, and abide by any decision he might come to. Petherick was ready to promise anything, and Tony handed him over seventeen and sixpence, which about cleared him out.

Tony was flattered at being the person chosen for a confidant, not reflecting that Benson would have been the only alternative under the circumstances; but he was anxious to comport himself well in the responsibility that had been thrust upon him. His position in the office was not such as to give him the right to pass over Petherick's lapse, but he wanted him to have another chance. He came to the conclusion that he would have to tell Henry;

but he would beg him not to be too hard on him. Then he thought he would tell Mrs. Clitheroe about it first, in confidence, and went to the Old Hall after dinner for that purpose.

Mrs. Clitheroe had a few people dining with her, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Rashdale, which gave Tony a thrill; and he was not sorry that Dolly's parents should see how highly he was thought of in this house. For he did not officially "know" the Rashdales. Mrs. Rashdale had not called upon Laura, and Tony was to some extent limited in his visitings by these formalities. Dolly could easily have asked him to their house, but during the few weeks in which she had accepted his advances there had been a slight flavour of concealment to salt their intercourse, and afterwards she hadn't wanted to. Duncombe was welcomed there at all times, and the semi-detached villa in which Dolly lived with her parents had assumed the guise of a fairy palace to Tony, because he was shut out of it. Dolly's parents also, who were very ordinary people, seemed to Tony of a class above his own, for the same reason. He had known Mr. Rashdale as a schoolmaster, and had a bowing acquaintance with Dolly's mother; but he felt himself totally undistinguished before them—a clerk in the City, no more, and, if known by them to be in pursuit of their daughter, probably regarded with strong disapproval.

Mr. Rashdale, however, was genial enough to him, as he drank his glass of port with the men before joining the ladies in the drawing-room, and this gratified him exceedingly, as did Mrs. Rashdale's smile when he greeted her afterwards. He felt that he was getting on indeed,

and surely when they went home they would say something about him—what a nice-looking young man he was, and how well-dressed and well-mannered, and how much he was liked at the Old Hall! He was a friend of Mr. Duncombe's. Why didn't Dolly ask them to the house together?

He managed to get Mrs. Clitheroe on to a sofa apart, and told her about her protégé. She was much disturbed, and said that any gambling at billiards or cards was strictly forbidden at the Club. They were allowed on that condition. She thought she must tell Father Crawley, who managed it. Tony hadn't thought of this, but put it aside for the moment. What was to be done with Petherick?

She was all for giving Petherick another chance—in the firm of Dare & Son. He must be talked to, and brought to a sense of the enormity of his offence. Father Crawley would be just the man to do that. He had such a wonderful understanding of boys and young men, and was so tender with them. Many a one like poor young Petherick, who had fallen into evil ways, had been helped and encouraged by him, and was now doing well. And she hoped Tony would keep an eye on him, in the office, and be kind to him. He would be under a sense of disgrace, but if he were made to feel that there was somebody who took an interest in him, his self-respect would be restored.

This was all more than Tony had bargained for. Mrs. Clitheroe had taken his coming to her as meaning that she was to decide upon everything; she liked making decisions of this sort, and was a little impatient of having them questioned in any detail. Tony said that he hardly

felt justified in keeping Petherick's dishonesty from his brother, but she waved that aside. Petherick had come to Tony for help, and it was his duty to see him through, in the office; she would look after him at home, or Father Crawley would. Between the three of them they would save him. She made Tony feel very young when she insisted upon repaying him the money that he had disbursed; but he was not sorry to have it back, for it was getting towards the end of the month, and he was very hard up, as usual.

He took Petherick the next morning to the "Mecca" where he and Hatch had played their dominoes, and told him what had been decided. Petherick cried, and said he would rather go to prison than have it known at home what he had done, which was nonsense; but he was a weak creature, only beginning to learn that he could no longer rely upon his boyish attractions to recommend him. Tony was able to assure him that only Father Crawley would be told. He had got that concession out of Mrs. Clitheroe, and although notice would certainly be taken of the betting that had gone on over the billiard tournament, Tony thought that Father Crawley would not think it necessary to make it known that the information upon which he would act had come to him through Petherick.

"You've been let off very easily," Tony told him. "I'm not at all sure that I ought not to tell Mr. Dare. However, I've decided not to, and you must see that I don't have to regret it, Petherick."

Petherick swore fervently that he never should, and Tony gave him some further advice, which he also received gratefully, or at least patiently. He told Tony

the next day that Father Crawley had been very kind to him, and had given him some work to do in the evenings by which he would be able to pay off the debt that Mrs. Clitheroe had adopted. There had been a great row about the gambling, but it was not known how it had come out. All the boys who were concerned had been forbidden the use of the billiard table for three months, and if there were a recurrence of the gambling it would be removed altogether.

Tony formed the opinion that it had all been dealt with wisely and thoroughly, and certainly there was a change in Petherick's attitude. The day before he had been frightened and sorry for himself, but now, although he showed great relief at having come off no worse, he showed also that he was ashamed of what he had done. Possibly his reformation was not of the most lasting kind, but it seemed to be genuine enough for the time being; and he was grateful to Tony, taking little opportunities to do something for him in the office, and pleased with any notice he received in return. He would always be of a parasitical nature, and dependant for support and encouragement upon others. Such a character as his was not likely to make much of the battle of life. It was well for Petherick that he had come under the influences that had surrounded him in his youth, but it remained to be seen whether they would avail against the pull of his desires as he grew older.

Fred Hopwood returned from his holiday ready to immerse himself in the new business that he and Henry had incubated together. He and his brother Morton, who was now a junior partner in the firm, had been idols of Tony's

ever since his boyhood. Their Harrow and Cambridge career gave them the right kind of distinction in his eyes, and both of them, Morton especially, had been cricketers above the ordinary. Indeed, Morton Hopwood, if he had not been so much engaged with the beginnings of his commercial career, might have spent his summers playing first-class cricket, and reached eminence in that world.

Morton had had his early business training in Australia, where the firm had a house, and had only lately come back to take up his work in London. Tony had been very glad to see him, and he was as friendly as ever, but, like Petherick, Tony was no longer a boy, to be treated with indulgent patronage, and as a man he was not enough of Morton's world to make a close friendship between them possible. He met him at Hilbury, and occasionally lunched with him in the City. It troubled him sometimes to think that Morton had lost interest in him. At this time he was dogged by that sense of himself as a nobody, and thought that every one in a position superior to his own must be judging him by his lack of distinction, which was marked in comparison to Morton's. Morton was not many years older than himself, but he had one career behind him, and was on the threshold of another; and he had many friends of his own standing, and plenty of money to amuse himself with. Tony couldn't have lived with him on anything like equal terms, though he touched his life here and there.

Fred Hopwood had been engrossed in his work for some years past, and there were few men of his age in the City who held the position that he did. Tony had to consider him in that light, especially after he took up the

work that brought him sometimes into business contact with him. He was always friendly, but hadn't much time or inclination for anything but business in business hours. Tony found him pleasanter to deal with than others of his business equals without his advantages of education behind them, but had to be careful above everything to show himself competent in his work. This was well within his powers, so long as the work did not require initiative from him. He even took some interest in it, and was glad enough to have his days filled, as they had never been before. There was little time for the Institute now, and he was sometimes kept late at the office, where the old leisurely way of doing things was being speeded up to something approaching modern hustle. It was more to satisfy Fred Hopwood than Henry that he bent himself to his work during that winter, but Henry told him he was getting on now, and pointed out what an absorbing pursuit business was if you made it your chief concern. Tony didn't agree with him in the least, but didn't say so. He was no more enamoured of business than before, and hardly more fitted for it. Because he did the work that was given him, Henry was blind to his lack of the higher qualities. He himself had approached his present mastery along the same path, and Tony was young yet, and could hardly be expected to show the grasp that would come to him later. Perhaps Fred Hopwood saw more clearly. Tony had an uneasy feeling that, in spite of his having no fault to find with him, and treating him always with friendliness, he had no great opinion of his business ability. If it was so, the opinion coincided with Tony's own. He would have given anything to be out of it.

CHAPTER XIV

ST. HUGH'S

EARLY in the year Tony paid a visit to Stephen at Cambridge. It was the first time he had been there. His father had taken him as a boy on a trip which included Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon, and Oxford had filled his imagination ever since. They had called upon one of Tony's schoolfellows, who had taken them over his college and entertained them in his rooms; and that experience had also sunk deep. There was something about the idea of undergraduate life which fascinated him like no other. He had read "Verdant Green," and "Tom Brown at Oxford" again and again for the sake of it, and could never hear enough talk from those of his friends who were going through or had gone through it.

St. Hugh's was a small college, not over full, and rather more than others divided into two sets of men, those who had come to Cambridge to work and those who had come to play. Tony had listened with avidity to Stephen's stories of doings which he had had no wish to share in, but described with indulgent amusement. Stephen had rooms in college, and had written to Tony that he had been able to get some for him for the week-end. So for two nights and the best part of two days he would be living the life. Even the thought of Dolly retired a little in his mind as he dwelt with delighted anticipation on this pleasure. If he couldn't be an undergraduate himself, he

could imagine himself one for the time being, and played with the idea of "going up," as he travelled to Cambridge on Saturday morning.

Stephen met him at the station, his old awkward, grinning self, but an unmistakable undergraduate, and so to be respected by Tony. Stephen, however, had other claims to respect than his mere membership of the great University. That awkwardness of frame and movement which had prevented his making a more than respectable player of games went along with an always increasing bodily strength, and had proved no barrier to a success greater than he or Tony had anticipated when they had discussed his dropping field games and taking to the river. He was rowing Seven in the St. Hugh's Lent boat. That was perhaps no great distinction, for the number of St. Hugh's men who rowed afforded no great choice. But Stephen had been accepted by the rowing authorities of his college as one who was worth watching. He was of the stuff of which oarsmen are made and was shaping well. There was great keenness in the St. Hugh's Lent boat, which was almost at the bottom of the Second Division, but was confidently expected to make bumps, and might well make the number that would give Stephen the right to a decorated oar, which he would hang up on his wall and have as a cherished possession for the rest of his life.

Good old Stephen! He had always seemed so entirely undistinguished, a friend whom Tony might, and did, regard with affection, but one whom he had always outshone in anything in which they had been rivals. But here was something in which he might rise to heights of

glory beyond Tony's power to follow. Visions of a "blue" had risen before Tony's dazzled eyes, when Stephen had told him modestly enough of various things that had been said to him. Stephen had laughed at it and told Tony that he didn't know how these things went, which had rather offended him, for he took such an interest in University affairs that he seemed to himself to know as much about them as Stephen. But there was no doubt that Stephen was in the running, though it was far too early to mark him as more than a possibility at this stage of his rowing career. It gave him something to think about and to aim at, other than the work he had come to Cambridge to do; and even as a freshman, and a poor man in a college largely frequented by rich men, he had already made his small mark, though as yet only trying his feet, and shrinking from attracting notice to himself.

St. Hugh's was at the other end of the town, and Tony would have taken one of those hansoms, many of them horsed by Newmarket screws, which were the fast vehicles of Cambridge progress in those days. But Stephen wouldn't allow this extravagance. They got into a horse-drawn tram, and went crawling and jingling up to the Market Place, and then walked to St. Hugh's. Stephen insisted upon carrying Tony's bag. "You look such a blood," he said, "that people will stare to see you carrying anything. It doesn't matter for me."

"Blood" was a new word in Stephen's vocabulary, evidently Cambridge for the old school word "swell." Tony was always on the lookout for these shibboleths, and adopted them one by one as they came within his intelligence. He was pleased to think that he might be taken

for a blood. He had discarded every article of attire that might have indicated that he was not a University man, and felt like one as he walked the streets among men dressed as he was, or wearing the caps and gowns required of their morning pursuit of knowledge. It was wonderful to pass through the gateway of St. Hugh's, and to be taken up to the rooms he was to occupy for a time just as if he were a member of the college. Stephen, so much more aware of his friend's desires and so much more sympathetic with them than he would at any time have acknowledged, said, "I've been lucky to get you some jolly rooms. They belong to Sumner, who is away on an *exeat*. They're just below mine, and I thought we might use them for lunch and brekker, as they're so much more comfortable."

Tony opened his eyes when he saw them. They were as near to his ideal of college rooms as they well could have been. The "keeping-room" was a large square room with two embrasured windows looking on to the court. A bright fire was burning in the old-fashioned grate, and the square table was laid for lunch, with a typical bonneted bedmaker hovering about it, *nec juvenis nec pulchra*, according to Statute. There is no room that tells more about its occupant than an undergraduate's room in college, which he has furnished and decorated himself. The absent Sumner was seen to be a young man used to comfort, and able to provide it for himself, though there were no signs of a debilitating luxury nor of any æsthetic taste above the ordinary. The furniture was good and solid; instead of the stuffed basket-chairs which contented most undergraduates there were two morocco-covered easy

chairs, and a sofa to match them, rather worn, but inviting to reflection or repose. The pictures were mostly large engravings in maple-wood frames, which made a good effect upon the panelled walls painted green. With dark tapestried curtains and an old Turkey carpet this might, so far, have been a comfortable man's room in a country house, and a fox's mask grinning from the wall, flanked by a couple of hares' pads, would have carried out the suggestion; but there were not wanting those signs of undergraduate occupation without which it would have lost half its interest to Tony. Two heraldic shields on either side of the mirror over the mantelpiece bore the arms of Eton and St. Hugh's Colleges, and the arms of St. Hugh's were much in evidence on the crockery with which the table was laid. There were a few framed photographic groups on the walls among the larger pictures. Books were not much in evidence. What there were were in a glass fronted bookcase, but did not fill it. There was a piano in the room, on the top of which was a collection of the topical songs of the day. The photographs displayed on the mantelpiece were chiefly the *cartes de visite* which the boys and young men of that day handed round to one another with such liberality; but there were larger framed photographs too, presumably of Sumner's "people"—an obvious member of the squirearchy standing for his father, a handsome youngish-looking woman for his mother, and a pretty girl in Court finery and two equally pretty children for his sisters.

"Sumner's a blood," said Stephen, with reference to these exhibits, as they stood before the fire warming themselves. "His father's a baronet. I wish he had been here;

then you could have seen him, Tony. But there's a lord keeps on the next staircase. He's rowing in my boat, so I know him. Oh, I'm keeping very good company, I can tell you. There are more bloods at Hugh's than anywhere else except Trinity. I say, I'm hungry. Where's the lunch, Mrs. Blott?"

The hot dishes of the lunch arrived at that moment in a tray on the head of a white-aproned kitchen-messenger, and were unloaded on to the table. The lunch was simple enough, for Stephen was in training, but it was served on old stone ware, with "St. Hugh's College Kitchens" on every piece, and the beer was in silver tankards. It was not like any other meal that Tony had ever eaten, and he enjoyed it, and the talk with Stephen over it.

"I don't generally go in for lunch, except bread and cheese," Stephen said. "But you're a visitor, old boy, and I'm going to treat you well. Jolly glad to see you too!"

They sat over the fire for a time afterwards, and then went up to Stephen's rooms, where he changed for the river. They were bare enough after Sumner's, but Tony would have envied them if he had seen them first; for they were unmistakable college rooms, with their "oak" and their "gyp-room," and the same outlook into the ivied Court.

Tony went down to the river with Stephen and two of his friends, who talked rowing shop all the time, which he enjoyed, though he was unable to take any part in it. Stephen talked as much as either of the others. He seemed to be thoroughly at home and happy in his new surroundings, and to have been accepted as a person of agreeable character and solid gifts by his companions.

Tony had already gathered that there was a division in the college between those represented by Sumner and those represented by Stephen. St. Hugh's was a horsy college on the one side and a reading college on the other, but there was more than one neutral meeting ground. The Lent boat was manned mostly by the reading men, but there were two of the other set in it, one of them the "lord" to whom Stephen had made reference, and Stephen showed himself as much at home with these as with the others. He would always be entirely himself, in whatever company he might be, and the good stuff in him was coming out more and more.

Tony looked on at all the preparation for getting out the boat and the settlement of the crew. A bitter wind was blowing with a haze of icy rain, and he was getting chilled even in his thick overcoat as he stood there with his shoulders hunched up and his hands deep in his pockets. The men in the boat had only their sweaters to protect them, and hands and legs were raw and blue with the cold; but it was all in the day's work, and they laughed and joked as they settled themselves. The cox, muffled up to the ears, with his hands in woollen gloves, looked the most uncomfortable of them, and would return colder than ever, while the oarsmen would have been warmed up to resist the attack of the elements. When they pushed out into the river, and at the rapped-out words of the cox went swinging away, with regular click of oars in the rowlocks, they seemed like a crew of heroes, rejoicing in their hardy youth and strength, and with a skill of regular movement remarkable to an onlooker who had never seen eight-oar rowing before. They were only the Lent

boat of a small college, more than half of them novices, but they seemed fine oarsmen to Tony, and of all of them Stephen seemed the best even to his inexperienced eyes, swinging easily and regularly, with a powerful drive and a well-controlled even movement of arms and wrists.

He watched them out of sight, and looked at the other boats following them down the river; and just as he crossed over to the other side, his eye was caught by a boat of another kind paddling down towards him, and he knew enough to recognize the light blue of the cox's blazer and of the blades of the oars as those of the University crew. Here was a thrill indeed, and he scanned their faces eagerly, and tried to decide what distinguished oarsman of the past it was who was waiting for them on his horse a little farther along the bank, ready to pick out and correct the faults so indistinguishable to Tony's admiring eye.

Stephen had thought that Tony might like to have a look round the colleges while he had to leave him alone; but it was so cold and wet that he preferred to go back to his rooms, and read by the fire. His rooms! He encouraged himself to feel like that about them as he passed through the gateway, not without a touch of the cap from a complaisant porter, and went up the broad oak steps of Staircase B. It was pleasant enough to have the quiet hour in front of him with a novel, sitting in one of those deep easy chairs in front of the fire, secure from interruption; but what if this had been really his room, to the warmth of which he was returning from the cold and damp outside? A great longing came over him for the life he would have lived in them, free from the deadly

interminable grind of the office, where there was no refreshment to the eye or the spirit, and the dank chill of a winter day caused almost as much discomfort within as without. Even Stephen in his sparsely furnished rooms upstairs had a place to work in a thousand times better than he had; and what a difference in the work, and in the immediate opportunity for enlivening recreation when the work was done!

Before he settled down to his book he had a look round the room, with its indications of the state of its owner, so very different from his own. Among the pictures was a large engraving showing a spare-looking whiskered gentleman seated on a fine horse, with a pack of hounds around him, and in the background a large stone house in a spreading park. "Sir Walter Sumner, of Basing Park, Meadshire, Baronet," the undergraduate Sumner's grandfather or great-grandfather, no doubt, and if he were the only son, or the eldest son, he might one day come to be painted in the same surroundings, and with the same enviable right to all that this picture represented. What luck some people had! Sumner, on *exeat*, might be disporting himself in that very house now, taking a day with his father's hounds, if they were still kept at Basing Park, or at any rate enjoying the amenities of a large country house as a relief from the arduous labours of term-time. Tony wouldn't have wanted to leave Cambridge during term if he had been an undergraduate of St. Hugh's; but if he had had such a home as that to go to it might have been different. He turned away with a sigh, but cheered up as he took his novel out of his bag and settled down with it in the embrace of the big chair.

He was at least in enjoyment of part of what the fates had poured out so richly upon Sumner, and would make the best of it while it remained to him.

He dined in Hall with Stephen, and enjoyed that immensely too. It was a snug little Hall, panelled in dark oak, with portraits of departed worthies of the college, most of them more worthy than handsome, hung round it. There was a mere handful of dons at the High Table, but Tony regarded them with interest, sitting there in their Masters' gowns, waited on by the butler-like gyps. Two oak tables ran down the length of the Hall, at which the undergraduates sat, likewise gowned, upon the heavy benches. Dinner did not take long for them, and they trooped out while the dons were only halfway through theirs, leaving them to carry on their enlightened conversation, free from the distraction of chatter from their juniors. Tony had dined with the crew, though not on the training fare to which they were confined, and most of them came up to his rooms, where coffee was brewed, and he was encouraged to smoke, although they couldn't. It was discovered that he could play the piano, better than any of them, and he was kept busy accompanying songs. It was a jolly evening not unduly prolonged, for the crew had to go to bed early, and there was talk as well as singing, and a certain amount of ragging to work off the steam of bodies brought to the pitch of condition and minds unburdened.

Tony could always make friends easily. He was quite at home with these men of his own age, who accepted him as one of themselves, with at least one accomplishment that made him a valued honorary member of their society,

and told him that he must by all means chuck that rotten life in the City and "come up here." He treated it as if it were at least a possibility, and indeed he had a half-formed vision in his mind of an appeal to Henry to give him the chance before it was too late, and leave him to make his own way afterwards. Whatever might happen to him, however much money he might make, something would be lacking in his life if he had not had this experience in his youth. He had always wanted it, but now his longing overcame every other desire. By the end of that friendly sociable evening, if he had been offered his choice between an immediate capitulation on the part of Dolly and three years, or even one, of undergraduate life, he would almost certainly have chosen the latter, though Dolly was always in his mind at this time, and somehow connected herself with everything that happened during that much enjoyed week-end.

He talked to Stephen about her when they went for a walk together on Sunday afternoon, after one of those long late breakfasts which were then a favourite form of Sunday entertainment with all except the "bloods," who preferred cold but elaborate luncheons ordered from the kitchens the day before. The weather was still cold and dull, but they warmed themselves and worked off the effect of the late indulgence over the three-mile Grantchester "grind."

Tony had had no idea of mentioning Dolly to Stephen, who had always treated his love affairs with snorting contempt; but it was difficult for him to keep away from the subject, and his heart had warmed anew to Stephen, who, in the midst of his new life had made him feel that he was

still his most valued friend and that all he was and all he did was of interest to him.

Stephen did not jeer this time. "I know I've played the fool with girls," said poor Tony; "but it's the real thing this time, Stephen. I don't believe Duncombe really cares for her, or I wouldn't go on trying for her against him. I know she liked me in the summer. You thought she did, didn't you?"

Stephen hadn't much consolation to give him. He could only advise him to try to get over it. From what he had noticed, he said, these fancies wore off. He made Tony smile ruefully by confessing that he himself had felt an attraction for a friend of his sister's who had seemed to like him all right too. But he had made up his mind that the time hadn't come for that sort of thing yet, and now they were very good friends, but nothing more. You *could* do it, if you made up your mind to it, and thought about other things instead of her.

This advice was not so unwelcome to Tony as might have been expected. He had suffered humiliations in his pursuit, and, however much he might be longing after Dolly during this visit, it had raised him in his own estimation to feel that he was a person whom others appreciated, if she didn't. Perhaps if he showed her that he didn't care so much after all, she would . . . But this was only going back to an old line of castle-building. He was not able to imagine a future in which he would have ceased to care for her.

But he was glad to have made a confidant of Stephen, and to have gained his sympathy over something in which he had never had it before. It brought them closer to-

gether, and Tony thought that there was nothing now that he would ever want to keep from this good friend of his.

They had another talk that evening, about Stephen's affairs this time, sitting in Stephen's room before he went to bed, with his oak "sported."

Stephen was biding his time, as he had said he would. He would make no decision about his future until the end of his first year. He had had to give up his idea of engineering practice in his spare time, for he hadn't any spare time, now that he was wanted on the river every afternoon. As long as he was reading classics, for which he had gained his scholarship, he must do all he could to keep his place. He wasn't brilliant at them, as Tony knew. He had to work harder than others, and he was working hard, eight hours a day except on Saturdays, when he took the evening off, and on Sundays.

Tony gained an increase of respect for him as his way of life revealed itself, so different from what his own would have been if he had "come up here." His work was the chief thing with Stephen, and though it was not congenial work and might not be leading him in any direction in which he would want to walk, there were no doubts to trouble him in it. He was fulfilling himself in the only way open to him at present, and his mind was at rest.

Then, as they became more confidential, sitting over the dying fire, Stephen told Tony with some hesitations and stumblings that he was becoming interested in an aspect of religion that played some part in University life in those days, and had played a still larger part a few years before. "It's what my father believed in," he

said. "Some of the older men I've met remember him, and say what a splendid man he was. Of course we had it at St. John's, but then Blair was such a humbug, it rather put me off, though I used to like him rather when we went there. There's a good deal I don't care about here, with the men who go in for it, and I haven't joined up with them yet. There aren't many at St. Hugh's. In fact there's only one—you haven't met him—who's always pressing me to come out in my true colours, as he calls it. I'm not ready yet. I don't know what I shall do. But you know, Tony, it's a real thing. I'm a lot happier than I was, believing what I do. And it makes me want to help other people too, instead of always thinking about myself and what *I* want."

Dear old Stephen! who had always been as unselfish as any one Tony knew. He felt very tender towards him, though he was not altogether undisturbed in his mind as to where this new inclination of his might lead him. Still, Stephen was so solid and self-controlled that it was not likely he would engage himself in any of the extravagances that even Tony was aware of in the adherents of the school of which his father had been a shining ornament. He would work it all out for himself, and whatever he did he would always be some one to whom Tony would look up with admiration and affection.

Stephen saw him off the next morning at an early hour, and he returned once more to the routine of the office, with even less inclination for it than he was accustomed to take with him travelling up from St. Leonards on Monday mornings.

CHAPTER XV

BECK AND PETHERICK

One afternoon, a few weeks after Tony's visit to Cambridge, he had lunched and was going back to the office, when he met a clergyman coming out of the group of buildings in which it was situated, who looked at him out of piercing eyes in an otherwise benignant face almost as if he knew him. There was nothing to indicate that he had come from the office of Dare & Son, but by the time Tony had reached it he had jumped to the conclusion that he must be Father Crawley, and that he had come about Petherick, who had been away for two days with an attack of influenza—or so he had written.

Mr. Richards was still out at lunch, and there was nobody in the outer office, but as Tony entered it Beck came out of Henry's room, and said in his usual half-breathless voice: "Oh, it's you, Mr. Anthony! Would you mind coming in here for a minute?"

Tony hung up his hat and followed him, under a strong sense of protest. It was just as if Beck had called him in, in the way that Henry might have done. That was one of the ways in which he kept up the irritation without which he seemed unable to exist. His place was in Henry's room, and he was of necessity in his inner counsels and represented him in many ways; but he had no right to do so in respect of his authority in the office. Yet he was always on the border line, and Tony knew that Mr. Richards had

to be constantly on the defensive, in spite of the dressing down that Beck had received on his account.

Tony went in, and sat himself down in Henry's chair, which he half-turned towards Beck. "Well, what is it?" he asked shortly.

"Did you see a clergyman going out as you came in?" asked Beck. "He has only just this moment left me."

"Yes, I did," said Tony. "Was it Father Crawley?"

"Crawley; yes. He gave his name as Crawley. He came to see Mr. Dare about Petherick."

Tony waited. It was a way he had learnt with Beck, to make him do most of the talking. This didn't suit him so well as to have some speech or word which he could take hold of to introduce friction into the conversation. Perhaps he had meant to question the "Father" in the style of his late visitor. If he had refused to accept it because of any anti-ritualistic prejudice it would have shown him to possess an opinion upon a subject outside the range of business, which he had never yet done.

"You didn't tell Mr. Dare about Petherick's thefts a few weeks ago, I think," said Beck.

"Is that what Father Crawley came about?" asked Tony.

"Well, no. But the information crept out. I must say I was rather surprised to hear it, Mr. Anthony, because——"

"Oh, were you?" Tony interrupted him, rising from his chair. "Well, hadn't you better tell Mr. Henry how surprised you were? It might interest him. It doesn't particularly interest me. Did Father Crawley come to see me or Mr. Henry?"

Beck did not accept the snub. It was one of his annoying ways not to accept snubs unless they were so marked as to create an effect of extreme rudeness, and then he would look pained but say nothing, which made the rudeness seem inexcusable. "I think he did not quite understand that it was not Mr. Dare who had consented to overlook Petherick's dishonesty," he said.

"Oh, yes, he did. He understood it perfectly well. I suppose he came here to see me, and you screwed it out of him. Look here, Beck, you tell Mr. Henry what you have to tell him, and if he wants any information out of me he'll ask for it himself. See?"

Beck remained unmoved. "That wasn't what he came about," he said. "Of course it came up, and I was able to assure him that whatever has gone wrong now owing to that dishonesty being concealed was not due to anything that Mr. Dare had done or left undone. He ought to have been told about it, of course; but as he wasn't, I felt it necessary to make that plain."

"Yes, of course you would," said the irritated Tony. "Anything to make trouble! What has Petherick been doing now?"

Beck made a movement in his chair towards the table. "I think I had better pass that on to Mr. Dare," he said. "Of course what was said to me was as his representative. He will pass it on to you, Mr. Anthony, if he sees fit."

"Well then, what did you want to get me in here for and begin on it?" asked Tony, in strong indignation. "You'll get your wings clipped again, Beck, if you're not jolly careful. You're at your old tricks; but they're understood now, you know."

"I'm sorry I don't meet with your approval, Mr. Anthony," said Beck, as he turned to his papers, and Tony went out, enraged with him, and not overpleased with himself.

Mr. Richards came into the office at that moment. "Something has been happening about Petherick," Tony said to him. "His parson friend has been here to tell me or Henry about it—I don't know which, because Beck saw him, and had to take it into his own hands, of course."

Mr. Richards cast a deprecatory look at the inner room. He could fight when a fight was forced upon him, but did not like an atmosphere of strife. He had no time to reply before Beck came to the door. "Petherick isn't ill at all," he said. "He has gone away, and this Mr.—this clergyman is afraid that he has got into bad hands. He came to know if we could give him any help in tracing him."

"I thought you said that what he had told you was for Henry's ears only," said Tony. "Hadn't you better keep it for him?"

Beck smiled. "You make it so difficult for me to say anything, Mr. Anthony," he said. "Mr.—Mr. Crawley knew that you had been in close contact with Petherick over that—over those thefts of his here, and he thought you might know something of the company he has been keeping since it happened, as it seems you had promised to keep an eye on him when he was away from home."

"I think you had better keep your story for Mr. Henry, Mr. Beck," said Mr. Richards quietly. "Tony, will you go round to Hopwoods and tell Mr. Fred—or

leave a message for him if he isn't there—that I shall be ready to go into those figures with him any time this afternoon that will be convenient to him?"

Tony was glad enough to get away. He was unable to deal with Beck without losing his temper, and so putting himself at a disadvantage. Beck wouldn't get much change out of Mr. Richards. He had already gone back into the inner room when Tony left the office. But how intolerable it was that Beck's way of making an embroilment out of everything he touched should have come in here! If Petherick had gone wrong again, and help was wanted to rescue him, that was what they ought to be thinking about, and not wasting time over Beck and his odious ways. Tony was inclined to reproach himself with not having taken more notice of Petherick of late. He had promised to give an eye to him in the office, and for the first few weeks after the promise had been given he had taken more notice of him than before, and Petherick had seemed grateful for it. But of late, with other things, chiefly summed up in Dolly, to occupy his mind, he had not taken any trouble about him, and looking back he thought he saw now that Petherick had avoided him. His discomfort of mind, when he asked himself whether he might have found out what was going on and done something to keep him straight, swamped the annoyance of it having come out that he had kept his previous lapse from Henry. Beck would make the most of that—had probably already made mischief of it with Father Crawley—but it wasn't really of importance. By the time he got back to the office he had almost forgotten Beck in his anxiety to know what it was that had happened to Petherick.

Henry had come in, and Mr. Richards was in his room. Tony went straight in.

"Oh, here you are!" said Henry, not overgraciously. "What's this story about Petherick taking money, and your keeping it to yourself?"

Tony's face darkened. "Is that of such tremendous importance?" he asked, with a look towards Beck. "They want us to help them find him, don't they?"

"Yes, but I must know everything that happened," said Henry. "Why did you keep his thefts from me?"

"It was only one theft—of under a pound. He came to me about it, and I said I'd help him, but I wouldn't promise not to tell you. I thought I ought to, but I went to Mrs. Clitheroe about him, and she persuaded me not to. I'm sorry if I was wrong, but I don't think it had much to do with what has happened now, whatever it is. I should like to know that, if the time has come when I may be told."

Another look of dislike towards Beck, who said: "I was just telling Mr. Dare that Mr. Crawley thought you must know some of the men he has been about with lately, who seem to have led him astray, as he has been spending so much of his time with you."

Tony stared at him in utter surprise, and Henry said at once: "I was just going to say that must have been a mistake, when you came in. Have you been about with him at all, outside the office?"

"No, of course not," said Tony. "Did you give Father Crawley to understand that I had been?" he asked Beck.

"I said I didn't know," said Beck. "Petherick had

been telling him that he had been with you, when there was some question of where he was spending his evenings."

Tony was silent for an instant. Then he turned to Henry and said quietly: "That's the sort of mischief that's made when Beck gets his finger into a pie. But hadn't we better drop all that, and see what can be done? I think I might have found out what was going on if I had taken more interest in Petherick lately. I'm sorry I didn't. But perhaps it isn't too late to help them."

Henry seemed for once to have lost control. He said, almost weakly: "Perhaps you had better go now at once and see Father Crawley. I wish either I or you had seen him when he came here."

"So do I," said Tony, as he went out. "Or anybody but the gentleman who did see him."

He did not reach home until nearly eight o'clock. They dined at seven at "Danefield," and did not wait for Tony, who was sometimes late, and sometimes absent altogether. Henry came into the dining-room to him, and heard his story.

"Father Crawley was out," he said. "I had to wait a long time for him. I'm afraid there's nothing that we can do. Petherick has got into the hands of a thoroughly bad lot, in the West End. The police are after some of them. Father Crawley thinks it may not be too late to get him away from them. He has done that kind of thing before with his precious choir boys. All I had to do was to persuade him that I wasn't one of the gang, and it took me some time to do it."

He laughed bitterly. He looked white and shocked,

and poured himself out another glass of wine, with a hand that trembled slightly. "That's what I owe to Beck," he said vindictively, with a quick glance at Henry.

Henry looked disturbed too, and asked him some further questions in a low voice. "I never thought it was so bad as that," he said. "Poor old boy! It's beastly for you to have been mixed up with that sort of thing."

"Yes, it is," said Tony doggedly. "And I owe it to Beck. If you didn't know what it was all about, he did; and he let Father Crawley go away thinking like that about me. In fact he encouraged it."

"Oh, no, Tony. Don't make too much of it."

Tony broke into a sob, but mastered himself immediately, and spoke in a quick tense voice. "I didn't know there was such beastliness in the world," he said. "I couldn't make out why Father Crawley was so short and so rude, when I began to talk to him. I tell you it *is* Beck's fault, Henry. He was wonderfully kind to me—Crawley, I mean—when he saw he had got it wrong, and he told me that when he went to the office he had no idea of anything but to get me to help him, if I could. He had even thought that Petherick might have been lying when he said he had been going about with me. It was Beck who put the ideas into his head. Oh, of course he was sharp enough not to say anything that wasn't true. But look here, Henry, I'll tell you what Father Crawley said, and it will show you better than anything. He said: 'Naturally, when your brother's secretary told me that he knew nothing about your movements outside business hours, and said it as if he knew a good deal, but wasn't going to give anything away, I could only come to one

conclusion.' That's what he said. I'm not going to meet that beast again. If you don't get rid of him I'm not going back to the office. He's been waiting to get at me ever since he's been there, and this is how he has done it."

"You needn't trouble about that, Tony. I sacked Beck this evening!"

This quiet statement did more to bring Tony to himself than anything could have done. He stared at Henry. "You sacked him!" he exclaimed. "What for?"

Henry smiled. "There's been quite enough to sack him for, according to you," he said.

Tony laughed, almost hysterically. "Well, that's good news," he said. "Good old Henry! But you didn't know what I've just been telling you. I don't suppose *he* told you, did he?"

Henry grew serious again. "I felt there was something," he said. "Well, if you want to know, Tony, I felt that he had his knife into you."

"You told me that I had my knife into him last time."

"Yes. If it had only been like that!—though I've been watching, and wasn't going to stand much more of the friction that he has been fomenting. I've had a word or two with Mr. Richards occasionally. But I saw that he wanted to down you, and wasn't acting straight about it. Mr. Richards and I both tackled him. I never realized how much Mr. Richards hated him. He told me after he had gone that he wouldn't have stayed if I had kept Beck on. Oh, he's an impossible fellow to have in the place. I know now why I got him so easily. He'll never keep a place, and I think he'll find it difficult now to get one at all. After what you told me—what Crawley said—

that's quite definite—I shall have something more to say to him to-morrow. And I shan't give him a recommendation. He can do what he likes about it. He's poisonous, there's no other word for him. But what a fool! He must have known this time, if he had thought about it, that he would be found out. I don't believe there's a man in the City better at his particular work than he is, and he chucks away all his chances, after repeated warnings too, just for the sake of gratifying spite. It seems incredible, but there it is."

"What did he say when you sacked him?"

"He said, 'Very well, sir,' just as if I'd told him to take a day off. Oh, you won't get anything out of him, whatever he may be feeling about it. There's something uncanny about him. I've begun to feel it myself, though as far as I'm concerned there has never been one single thing in him that I could have wanted different. He's a machine. I suppose that's it—a perfect machine—and one doesn't like to work entirely with machines. And the one human point in him that comes out is this insane desire to make trouble. Well, I shan't get my work done so well, whoever does it; but, you know, Tony, I'm relieved that he's going, all the same. By the by, you had better take on his work until I get somebody else. I can't do without somebody now. I won't keep you at it for long, but it won't do you any harm to trot about with me for a week or two. Are you going to St. Leonards to-morrow?"

"I wasn't; but I'm not coming to the office, if Beck is going to be there."

"I don't want you to come to the office. I said so, didn't I?"

"Yes, I suppose so. You've been very good about it, Henry, especially if you sacked Beck on my account before you knew the worst about him. I'll have a slack day then to-morrow. I shan't be sorry. Shall I begin with you on Monday?"

"Yes. Beck will have to leave everything in order for you. I can trust him to do that. Whatever he is, he has never failed in his work in the slightest degree. He's an enigma, but I'm tired of trying to find the answer to him."

Henry told him the next afternoon that Beck had taken his further censure without turning a hair. He had been perfectly respectful under the most damaging indictment, and had denied in a shocked sort of way any intention of making mischief, over this or anything else. When Tony saw Mr. Richards on Monday morning he found him at last ready to express his dislike of Beck. He stood leaning against his desk, handling the keys in his pocket, and appeared once again a man at ease with the world.

"He was a dreadful fellow, that," he said. "We're well rid of him. I thought about him in church yesterday. Very wrong of me, no doubt, as I wasn't forgiving him anything. But in the Psalms there was a lot about 'the wicked,' and it suddenly occurred to me that Beck was one of 'the wicked.' It's a funny thing that we don't think of 'the wicked' as people like ourselves at all. Beck was inhuman. That's what Beck was."

He turned to unlock his desk. Benson turned round

on his high stool, and looked over his spectacles. "I maintain, Mr. Richards," he said, in the deliberate carefree tone that had not been heard from him of late; "I maintain that Mr. Beck was possessed of a devil."

Beck disappeared. He did not apply to Henry for any recommendation, and was not seen again in the City. Years after, Tony saw him crossing the lobby of the House of Commons, carrying the despatch box of a Cabinet Minister, with whom he was in earnest low-spoken conversation. It would be invidious to mention names, but this Minister was well-known for the wonderful grasp he showed of the details of the work of his Department, and provided a mild surprise by losing the seat he had held safely for nearly twenty years in a General Election at which his party came in on the top of the wave. It was said that he was good in the House, but couldn't keep his party organization in hand in his Constituency.

As for poor Petherick the indefatigable Father Crawley found him, but he slipped through his fingers again, and was lost in that dark underworld which runs like a sewer beneath the fair-seeming of great cities. Sometimes, in moments of self-dissatisfaction, Tony felt it a stain upon his record that he might have looked after Petherick and saved him from his fall, and hadn't done so. But it is doubtful if he could have held back for long one who lacked all capacity for looking after himself.

CHAPTER XVI

CHANGE

Tony spent a busy fortnight as Henry's chief lieutenant. The change of work and the constant running about were exhilarating at first, and Henry was lenient with him, and friendly, as they went from one appointment to another, which he probably hadn't been with Beck, who would not have required leniency or have known what to do with friendliness. There were times when the elder-brotherly spirit showed itself strongly in Henry, and it did so for some days after the trouble that Tony had gone through. There were also times when the Head-of-the-Firm spirit showed itself as strongly, and this spirit began to take the place of the other after a few days had elapsed.

Up till then Tony had thought that he was doing rather well. It was more interesting to put his brain to some problem that Henry was working out, and to master its details, than to carry out the routine work which had filled most of his days. Perhaps if Henry had started with him instead of Beck to attend him, he would have taken more pains to make things plain as he went along; as it was, he expected him to know more than he did know, and was impatient with him over ignorances that were, it must be confessed, greater than they should have been, considering the time he had been in the City. Tony might have minded the inevitable showing up of his lapses less if it had been between him and Henry alone; but he

had to be in constant attendance in conferences with Henry and Fred Hopwood discussing affairs the bearings of which were altogether beyond him. Sometimes he was dismissed, as if what they were talking about was so confidential that even a confidential secretary was in the way. But it seemed to him that they might just as well have gone on talking with him there, for he hadn't understood anything of what they had been driving at, though he had had to keep Henry supplied with constant facts and figures which he had been told to get together for him. He would sit looking about him at Fred's large airy room, in which there was little to set the imagination working, and sometimes at the pleasant good-looking face of Fred, and think of him as the undergraduate he had been only a few years ago, or as the cricketer whom he had seen himself, batting with resource and mastery, gloved and padded, or standing to field in his clean white flannels, an athletic figure with nothing to indicate the so-different pursuits in which his life was largely spent. Or his thoughts would go off on quests of his own, and he would be far away when Henry would suddenly turn to him with a sharp request for some information he was supposed to have at his fingers' ends. Then he would wake up to the fact that he had lost the thread of their talk altogether, and as often as not would make a muddle of something that he knew perfectly well.

One day Fred, who was always friendly with him, even when he laughed at him for wool-gathering, asked him to lunch, and took him to an old-established club, filled at this time of the day with men, some of whom he recognized as of the highest commercial or financial impor-

tance. They sat at a small table in the crowded dining-room, and when their wants had been supplied Fred went straight to his point, as his custom was.

"Look here, Tony," he said. "Why don't you buck up a bit and take hold of this job that you've set yourself to do? You'll never be any good at it unless you do."

Now Tony was feeling particularly "fed up" with this job that he had set himself to do. It was Monday morning, and he had come up from St. Leonards, where he had enjoyed his week-end more than usual. Stephen had been there with him, just down from Cambridge and full of his doings there. It was warm sunny weather, more like May than March, and Miss Barrett had asked Stephen to stay on for a few days. So Tony had left him there early in the morning, to enjoy himself, and returned to take up the work of attendance upon Henry, whom he had found in one of his most fussy and difficult moods. Henry had addressed him in almost identical terms as those used by Fred, and although his address had been purely critical, while Fred's was sympathetic, the repetition jarred on his frayed nerves.

"Oh, I'm sick of this job," he said at once. "I'd rather be doing anything else in the world." Then, because he didn't want to offend Fred, he laughed and said: "Henry has been very trying this morning. If I had to work for you instead of him, I dare say I shouldn't mind it so much. But I'm afraid I never *shall* be much good at it. I do my best—at least sometimes—but it doesn't interest me. And such lots of other things do."

"What sort of things, Tony?" Fred was like a kind elder brother, and the sense of his being a man of import-

ance in business, of whom Tony was just a little afraid, fell away from him. He told him about all the things that he was interested in—books and music, and his painting and writing—and, because the undergraduate life was an ever-present obsession with him, he ended up with that. "Perhaps if I had been at Cambridge, like you and Morton," he said, "I might have settled down to this sort of thing. But I'm always wishing I was there. I can't help it, Fred. I'm made like that."

"I suppose you're made like most of us, Tony. I think it's a good thing to have it, if it doesn't get in the way of your making good afterwards. You've had it, and you're ready for something else. I don't think you even lose time in the long run. Of course that's only if there's something waiting for you to step into. But I've always understood that Henry wouldn't keep a place open for you in his business if you hadn't taken it up when you did."

"It wasn't quite like that," Tony said, after a pause for consideration. It had suddenly struck him that Fred wouldn't be likely to know that he had been left entirely dependent on Henry, and that he had little choice in the matter. "He thought it would be waste of time for me to go to the Varsity," he said. "You thought so too, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, I did, Tony, under the circumstances. But I thought you were more fitted for business than you seem to be. Your brother has a first-class business brain, and I thought you would work into it better. Don't you care for any of it? You've been long enough at it to see that there's a good deal of variety in what one has to do. There was a lot I disliked myself when I first started."

Tony laughed again. "I'm not liking running about after Henry just at the moment," he said. "Oh, he's decent enough to me really. But we're a one man show. He said so himself once. I dare say I should like it better if I were in a big office like yours."

"Well then you'll have what you want, won't you?"

Tony stared at him. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Fred stared in his turn, and a smile broke over his face. "What have Henry and I been talking about ever since you've been doing his work for him?" he asked.

Tony looked down in confusion. "That's what all those figures were for!" he said.

Fred laughed outright. "You're a record, Tony," he said. "Well, do you know I really don't think you *are* cut out for it. Of course we've observed a sort of ostrich-like concealment of our fell purpose, and you've been sent out of the room occasionally. But I should have thought by this time you'd have known as much about it as we do. Henry is going to bring his business to us, and we are going to—" He broke off. "Of course there isn't a word to be breathed outside yet," he said in his more business-like tone.

"Oh, you can trust me for that at least," Tony said. "I'm very glad to hear it, Fred. When is it going to happen?"

"Oh, not just yet. There's a lot to arrange. Hallo, there's Greeley! Let's get him over here. We can make room for him."

Greeley was H. B. Greeley, the famous cricketer, now a member of Lloyds. He joined them at their table, and Tony was so absorbed in the spirit of hero-worship that

he thought no more of what Fred had told him until he was on his way back to the office.

Two or three evenings later he was sitting with Henry after Laura had gone up to bed. Henry laid down his book and said: "I want to talk to you about the office."

Tony was in the middle of "The Moonstone," which he was reading for the first time. Henry could usually be trusted not to break into such absorptions, for he was a close reader himself. A word or two might be spoken occasionally between them, but there was a tacit understanding that "business" should not obtrude itself on that evening hour, which held a pleasant sense of companionship, as they sat by the fire, each of them deep in his book. Tony looked up with a frown. He had had a wearing day with Henry, and had not succeeded in pleasing him. But it was really too much to be brought to book about it now.

"You've had two years and a half of it," Henry said. "You don't care about it; you don't put your mind to it. I've begun to think lately that you never will."

"I think you might leave me alone about it now," said Tony with resentment. "You've been grumbling at me all day."

"I'm not grumbling at you now. It's not altogether your fault. You don't seem to be cut out for it, and perhaps I put you into it too young. However, it's no use keeping you at something you don't like, and aren't doing much good at. You've got to make your living though. I was going to tell you about my amalgamation with Hopwoods, which we've been discussing for some time past. But Fred says he's told you about it already."

"He thought I knew," Tony said. "I suppose I might have picked it up. It seemed to amuse him that I hadn't."

"Yes, I know. That rather opened my eyes. *I* shouldn't have expected you to pick it up, though Beck knew well enough what we were driving at after our first meeting. Well, the long and the short of it is, Tony, that Fred doesn't think there's much of an opening for you when the change is made."

This struck Tony disagreeably. He had been looking forward to the change. Life would be brighter altogether in Hopwoods' office, where there were young men in plenty, some of them University men spending a year or so gaining business experience before embarking in their own galleys.

"I told Fred I didn't like business," he said. "I shouldn't have thought he would have used that to turn me down."

Henry smiled, not unkindly. "Perhaps it wasn't the wisest thing to say, when one of the stipulations I had held out for was that you should have as much of a chance there as if we had kept on by ourselves," he said. "However, I'm not altogether sorry you did, and I don't know that you need be sorry either. Did you tell him anything about father—about his not making a will, or anything of that sort?"

"No, of course not," said Tony with some indignation.

"Well, I didn't mean quite that. But he might think that you would be coming in for money of your own when you come of age. He wouldn't know that the business was all father had to leave, and that that was only a question of good will, which couldn't have been turned into

money. I'd rather nobody did know that. I've tried to treat you in every way as he would have done—I mean in giving you a home, and providing for your future."

"Oh, yes, Henry, I know that. I wish I could have done better with the chance you *have* given me. I'm afraid I've been rather a slacker."

"You have sometimes; but on the whole you haven't done so badly. Your heart hasn't been in it; that accounts for everything. Still, as I say, you've got to make your living. What do you want to do? If it isn't to be business, what is it to be?"

Tony was quite unprepared for this question. It was one thing to grumble at his hard luck in having to do uncongenial work, and another to find congenial work that would earn him money, as this did. Besides, except for the irritations caused by his temporary work as Henry's secretary, he wasn't disliking it so much now, and for the last few days his mind had run agreeably upon the change that was coming.

"I really don't know," he said. "I haven't been thinking about it; not in that way. There are lots of things I should like to do; but if it comes to earning my living, what is there except another job in the City? I believe I could have done all right at Hopwoods'. I must say I don't much care about being turned down like that."

"Oh, don't make a fuss about that. If it were only a question of a job, we should take you in; and Fred would like to have you; he said so. But can't you see that that's different from having a partnership to work up to? That's what I had to offer you, and that's what they won't. It wouldn't be barred out, but you'd have to make

yourself worth it, and Fred doubts if you could. Besides, it couldn't be for many years; there isn't room. Much better try something else altogether, that you're more fitted for, while you're still young. You came into the City early. You'd only have left school last year if you had been going in for a profession; and then you'd have had to have some years of training. Well, I'm ready to give you that. I'm not proposing to turn you out on the world penniless, Tony. What about the Bar? Fred thought you might do well at that, and that your business training would help you. He says you're not bad at geting up a case. If you studied commercial law we might be able to put work in your way, and give you a start."

Tony rather liked the idea of the Bar. It meant chambers in the Temple, which would be rather like living in rooms in college. And barristers wore wigs and gowns; he had seen them when he had visited the new Law Courts.

"Fred thought it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to go to Cambridge. You'd only be a year behind the usual age. How would you like that?"

Was it possible that the whole of one's outlook in life could be suddenly changed, by such a question as Henry's asked in the same tone as if he had been offering a choice between cheddar and gorgonzola?

"How would I like it?" exclaimed Tony, looking at him with a smile of ecstasy. "How would I like to go to heaven? Well, I shouldn't. I'd rather go to Cambridge. Do you really mean it, Henry? Don't raise me up and cast me down again."

Henry remained businesslike. "Oh, of course you'd like it for the fun of it," he said. "But you'd be going

with a definite end in view. It would only be a stepping-stone. You'd go there to read law. But we needn't decide upon the Bar, and we mustn't do anything in a hurry. Let's think it well over."

Probably Tony had never been so happy as he was that night when he went upstairs. His mind had dwelt so long upon the idea of University life that nothing else that could have been offered him would have given him such pleasure. This morning he had got up in this room with the prospect of his usual captive day in front of him, and in front of that more days like it, stretching away into the future. And now he was free, and going to do what he wanted most of all. It was incredible that such a change should have been wrought in so short a time; he had to keep on telling himself that it was true in order to retain his grasp of it. Everything was altered for him, at a stroke. Even Dolly seemed more within his reach because of it. But nearly enough has been said about Dolly, who was not for much longer to trouble his mind. He was not cured of her by this immense stroke of good fortune, but perhaps the cure had already begun, for she did not monopolize his thoughts at any time during this first evening.

The big change involved innumerable little ones. He was only to stay for a week longer in the office, to clear up his work and hand it over. He was to go to St. Hugh's. He was to have an allowance of £250 a year, out of which he was to pay all his University expenses, and it was to begin at once. Henry had been generous. Tony was to consider "Danefield" his home, to come to whenever he wished, but he would spend some of his time at St. Leon-

ards, where he had also been offered a home. He was to go down there on the very next Saturday and begin work upon his books. Might as well begin that at once, Henry had said, cautious about too much stress being laid upon the coming emancipation. It had been left unsettled whether he should go to Cambridge immediately, or wait until the October term. He would consult Stephen about that.

Dear old Stephen! He sat down to write to him directly he got up into his room. He knew how pleased he would be. It was because of him that Tony was going to St. Hugh's—if they would have him; but he didn't think there would be much difficulty about that. He wrote to his aunt too, told her the good news, and asked her to keep Stephen until he came down. Who else was there he could write to? It made it all the more real to tell people. He wrote to Hatch, who had gone to Paris for his French after all, and was now in Wiesbaden for his German. He would go to see Mr. Stenning, but wrote to him too; he was sure he would be pleased, and no doubt he would have valuable advice to give him.

He went out and posted his letters at the pillar-box at the corner of the road. It was a lovely starlit night, mild and still. He strolled up and down under the leafless trees, hugging his pleasure. He didn't want to go to bed, and would have liked to go for a walk to the Common, but had to keep within sight of the house, as he had left the door ajar.

What a delightful thing life was, when you were young, and had your freedom! He looked upon University life as one of almost perfect freedom; and only half of the

year would be spent at Cambridge. During the vacations he could go wherever he liked, and he would have enough money for going about. He would be very well off, with the allowance Henry was going to give him. Stephen had £170 a year, scholarship and all, and did very well on it. Tony's extra £80 seemed to make a rich man of him. He would be able to play his part in the sociabilities of St. Hugh's. He would work, of course, but he needn't identify himself entirely with the reading set, as Stephen, except for his rowing, had done. Should he row or play games? He gave some consideration to that question, on this first evening. He knew enough about cricket and football to have no illusions about himself. He was a fair player at both, good enough, perhaps, to represent a small college like St. Hugh's, but certainly not good enough to represent the University, nor ever likely to be. He knew nothing about rowing, but because Stephen had shown aptitude as an oar upon first taking it up, he was inclined to think of it as a sort of lottery, in which you might prove to be a prize yourself. Stephen was a heavy weight, and he wasn't; but—well, there was no telling. It might be worth while to try.

How good Fred had been about it! He must have exercised some persuasion upon Henry, because on their first talking this question over after their father's death, Henry had made it clear that "the Varsity" was out of the question for him, even if he had succeeded in getting a scholarship, of which there was now no chance. Of course Henry was making more money than his father had made. At least Tony supposed so, for he was always talking about how the business had increased. And he was not

living in such a large house. Oh, he could afford it well enough; but it was decent of him all the same to send him to Cambridge. To Cambridge! Was he really going there? It was just one of the things that people in their position didn't do, unless there was some quite definite result to come from it. People like the Hopwoods did; but there was just the difference. Perhaps Henry was inclined to act up to the Hopwood standards, now that he was to be so closely allied to them in business. Tony gave a little thought to that, in an interval of making plans on his own account. It was a considerable achievement of Henry's to have made such headway with an old-fashioned business that in less than four years he had made it worth while for such a firm as Hopwood's to take it over, and him with it.

But what was he going to make of his success? It was all very well to go stumping about the City, with a subservient secretary at his heels, attending Board Meetings, and being important generally. But what was to come of it all? He had what he wanted at home already; and at home there was always Laura. How could she make use of more than she had now, except by providing for the advancement of the Anglo-Catholic cause? At any rate, Tony wouldn't have changed his own lot in life for that of Henry, however much money he might look forward to making. But he wouldn't forget that it was Henry who had given him what he wanted most. His last thought before he went in was that Henry had been a good brother to him, and that now he would no longer have him as a business chief there should be no more friction between them if he could help it.

CHAPTER XVII

EMANCIPATION

Tony's last week in the City passed like a few hours. It was lit up by his anticipations of something delightful to come, and seemed already to belong to the new life. There was a lull in Henry's activities, and the business of interviewing applicants for the post of secretary was renewed. Tony took a benevolent interest in them as they passed through the office. Most of them seemed so keen on getting the job that he was relinquishing with such heartfelt satisfaction. But what a difference between the lot of whichever of them should be chosen and his! One of them would be coming day by day to tread the dull round in these streets and offices, while he would be where life was free and open, and there would never be any dulness at all.

Mr. Richards received his news sympathetically. "That will suit you much better," he said. "You're not cut out for office work." But Mr. Richards seemed less cheerful than usual at this time. Tony wasn't aware of Henry's having told him anything about the coming change, but probably he had gathered that something was in the wind, and didn't know how it might affect him.

Benson was interested too. He connected Oxford and Cambridge with dark blue and light blue, and the annual race from Putney to Mortlake, in which he confidently expected Tony to row. He, also, indicated that Tony wasn't cut out for office work, as did most others to whom

he gave his news. He was a trifle dashed to find how universal the impression seemed to be. His friends in the train all had it, but among them he was considered a lucky dog to be going to Cambridge, and in their congratulations tasted some of the fruits of his good fortune.

Duncombe, whom he saw several times during this week, seemed to envy him more than anybody. Possibly he had had some set-back in his financial ambitions. He didn't say so, but his view of the life of a bank clerk was certainly less optimistic than it had been, and he said that he would give a lot to be in Tony's shoes. Or perhaps Dolly was giving him trouble.

Dolly's name was now seldom mentioned between them. Her photograph still smiled radiantly from Duncombe's mantelpiece, and Tony found it difficult to keep his eyes away from it when he sat with it within his view. But he had gained the idea that Duncombe wanted the affair ended. Perhaps he was getting tired of Dolly; or perhaps she was getting tired of him. If it were so, Tony's star might soon be in the ascendant again. The idea of it stirred him, but not nearly so much as it would have done a week before. The idea, at least, of his being in some way beneath Dolly's notice had left him. He would be a more noticeable person as a Cambridge undergraduate than as the clerk in the City whom she had hitherto known.

He saw Dolly herself, by chance, as he was going home from the station, at his usual time in the evening. Was that time known to her? She explained fully how she happened to be just there just then, but they stopped in the road for the explanation, and for a little further con-

versation, which was entirely devoid of the veiled hostilities of other meetings. She was pleased to hear of Tony's good fortune, though, her father having been at Oxford, she did not disguise her preference for that University.

Tony was able to bear himself with smiling self-possession in this conversation, and thought with some satisfaction afterwards that if Dolly wanted to keep her hold over him she would have to take some trouble about it now. The time had gone by, though not for very long—in fact, for about four days—when she might expect an attitude of lugubrious longing from him, which had always been a mistake anyhow. But how sweet she was, when she made herself friendly! There was still none like her, none. And after all, he didn't want a continual contest, which of them should have the advantage over the other. A blissful community of taste was what was to be desired, and if she was ready for that now, well so was he, and all the trouble of the past months should be forgiven and forgotten.

It was curious how, in that short week, in which he had not yet disentangled himself from the bonds of his City life, his whole feeling about himself altered. Even with Henry, who was giving him the new life that was coming to him, something of the old sense of superiority, which had caused irritation between them during their father's lifetime, returned. In those days Henry had been living in a little villa in a new suburb, and Tony in the opulent house of his birth. He had become ashamed of the attitude he had held towards Henry then, and was ashamed of the unreasonable recrudescence of it now, and careful to keep it concealed. Henry was a good sort, and he was

grateful to him. It didn't do to talk too much of the amenities of undergraduate life to him and Laura, though his great pleasure in having it before him could not be hidden, or need be. They discussed the legal studies which were the ostensible reason for his going to Cambridge, but to which he scarcely gave a thought otherwise. He was to read for the Law Tripos, and it came to be agreed that he should get both parts of the Little-Go out of the way in his first term, reading for them at home during the summer, and going to Cambridge in October. The Headmaster, to whom Tony had been glad to go for his testimonials, had advised that. So had Mr. Broadbent, Stephen's stepfather, who had shown himself unexpectedly interested in the new departure, and had offered to overlook his classical studies. Mr. Broadbent had thought that he would have to have special coaching for the whole examination, as it was so long since he had left school, and he must have got very rusty. But Tony had no mind to put himself into such bondage. He had not entirely dropped his classics, and the mathematics would present no difficulties to him. He thought he could do it by himself if he worked hard; and he had every intention of working hard for this purpose.

It was Laura who showed herself a little difficult here. She had received the great news almost with apathy. Her attitude was that she was pleased if Tony was pleased, but could not be expected to take very much interest at any time in purely mundane affairs. She woke up to them, however, when the plan of reading at home was seen to involve having a man about the house all day long. She would have to provide luncheon; for herself it was no

trouble at all, because she was often out, and scarcely ate anything when she wasn't. The doing of the rooms would throw extra work upon the servants. Other little difficulties were advanced, not all at once, or in the way of actual objection, but so as to make Tony say at last that perhaps he had better arrange to stay on at St. Leonards, and do his work there.

But Henry wouldn't have that. He quelled Laura decisively. This was to be Tony's home, and he was to come to it whenever he wanted to. They had both been glad to have him there, and always would be. He wasn't going to have life spoiled by little domestic difficulties, which could be got over easily enough if they were faced.

He spoke with some irritation, which he had never shown towards Laura in the old days, but not infrequently showed now. Laura took it with her usual beautiful meekness, and said of course she was just as pleased to have Tony there as he was. She had never meant to raise difficulties. She had only wished to point out. . . . However, nothing more need be said about it. She would manage.

Afterwards she told Tony that she would be very sorry *not* to have him living regularly with them any longer, and gave him to understand that her life was not a happy one, though this was done more by half-stifled sighs and a patient attitude of resignation than by spoken criticism of Henry, whose name was not mentioned. It was gratifying to Tony to know that she really would rather have him there than not, and his feelings towards Henry were of the warmest, for he had made it very plain by the way he had spoken that Tony's absence would make a lot of

difference to him. Poor old Henry! It was hard luck that just as he was getting on so well the attractions of his home life were lessening to such an extent that they seemed likely to disappear altogether before long. Tony had intended to spend a good deal of his time during the summer at Hilbury, where life would be more agreeable to him than ever now that he was free to take his part in all of it, and this seemed to make it a duty for him to do so. To use a term more applicable to concerted games, a rot seemed to have set in in the marital relations of Henry and Laura, and it was up to him to stop it.

Tony was accepted as a Pensioner of St. Hugh's, and went proudly to Cambridge to interview the Dean. It was at the end of the Easter vacation, and the college was nearly empty, but he prowled about it with a strong sense of possession, and longed for the time when he should be in residence within its venerable walls. The intervening months, however, stretched invitingly in front of him. He started upon his preparatory work at St. Leonards with a great zest for it. It was delightful to have Greek and Latin, interspersed with mathematics and the water-tight arguments of Archdeacon Paley in support of Christianity, as his subjects, instead of the arid details of commerce. He mapped out his course, so long every day for each study, and kept a time-table. Miss Barrett had given him a table in his bedroom, and he sat there during stated hours of the day, in view of the sea, and sometimes at night. Every detail of his work pleased him. He had enjoyed buying the necessary books out of his allowance, which was rolling itself up to a respectable degree of capital during this time in which he had no living expenses to

deplete it, and writing his name in them, "Anthony Dare, St. Hugh's College, Cambridge." How well it looked, written in the classical hand which he had copied from the Headmaster's and retained even for purposes of business correspondence during that time, now gone for ever, when he had been a clerk in the City! He enjoyed the particular kind of application which came from having to teach himself, as it were, and found that his brain responded to the impulse as it had never done at school over the same subjects. He enjoyed marking off his progress on books and time-sheets, and it was so rapid at first that he foresaw his work finished months before it would be necessary. But of course he would have his holidays—a long one in the summer, and a day or two off now and again if anything presented itself that he wanted to do. Hatch had written to ask him to go to Wiesbaden, some time before he was to leave it himself in July. But he had said he couldn't do that, though he might possibly go abroad later. He had never been abroad, and it pleased him to think that he could, whenever he liked, with time and money at his disposal. In the meantime he had just the life that he wanted, with his working hours filled, and immediate recreation around him.

Aunt Bertha showed herself happy in having him with her. In his openness to right feeling, which came from doing what was good for him to do and finding complete satisfaction in it, gratitude was strong in him at this time. He wrote frequently to Henry, and Henry would reply, in letters that were short but seldom failed to indicate that he missed him at "Danefield," and almost gave the impression that he missed him in the office too. With

Aunt Bertha he was on the alert not to go too much his own way. The hours he gave to his work were enough to make his day somewhat arduous after the first flush of novelty had departed, and his inclination was to rush out immediately to some exercise or recreation when he had come to the end of a period. And she liked to see him happy and doing what he wanted to do, but also liked to have him with her. It was a credit to both of them that during the whole time he stayed at St. Leonards, though he was perforce much by himself, there was never any sense of his neglecting her.

He could not spare much time for Aunt Charlotte, but did not neglect her either, for she was another of the people who enjoyed his company, and her generosity in the matter of presents was greater than ever. Indeed, present-giving seemed to have become a nervous habit with her, and she seldom saw him without wanting to press something upon him. There was no difficulty about accepting the things she bought for him, for they seldom cost more than a shilling or two. She would buy anything she saw in a shop that had any relation to brain work, or to reading or writing, so long as its price did not reach two shillings. One and elevenpence three farthings she didn't mind, but seldom jumped the barrier of the extra farthing. She gave him at various times inkstands, pen-trays and paper-weights of varying design, but most of them with some reminder of Hastings or St. Leonards worked into their fabric, indelible pencils and pieces of india rubber, cheap blotters, book-marks, a reading-glass, calendars, Thoughts for the Day, a threepenny Atlas, a sixpenny Dictionary, a ruler and a pair of compasses.

But the gifts of money he felt obliged to dodge after a time. Young people seldom mind taking tips from well-endowed relatives, and Aunt Charlotte seemed to be made of money by the lavish way in which she pressed it upon him. If she had presented him with an occasional five pound note, he would have accepted it with gratitude, but it was half a sovereign here and half a crown there, and at last he told her that he couldn't take money from her every time he saw her, or she would be thinking he came to see her for that. She was struck to the heart by such an idea. Though odd in some of her ways she was full of sensibility, and you had to be careful not to upset her. Tony told her how generous Henry had been about money, which revived her, for she instantly demanded all particulars, and when they had been given her shook her head with a severe air, and said: "Not enough."

Tony laughed at her. "You'd have said that if it had been five hundred a year," he said.

"And it ought to have been five hundred a year, Tony," she said at once. "It *ought* to have been five hundred. No, I should *not* have said that was not enough. I should have said: 'Well, Henry has done the right thing for once, but it won't ruin him, and I should have respected him more if it had been six.' But there! I don't suppose *Henry* had much to do with it. *She* wouldn't allow him to be generous, however much he might be inclined to it himself."

"You don't like her, do you, Aunt Charlotte? But she doesn't have much to do with that sort of thing, I can assure you; and I've nothing to grumble about with Henry.

He has been very good to me, and to be perfectly frank with you I don't like to hear him blamed."

"Now that's what I like about you, Tony dear. You never speak ill of anybody."

"I certainly shouldn't want to speak ill of Henry. Why are you so up against him?"

"Ah! Poor Henry!" she replied. "Poor Henry! Shall we go to Semadini's and have a cup of hot chocolate, Tony?"

Tony worked at St. Leonards through the month of April, after which it had been settled that he should go back to Hilbury, for the benefit of Mr. Broadbent's supervision of his studies. But the school term wasn't to begin until the eighth of May, and he thought a short break would be beneficial to him. He wrote to Hatch and said he would come to Wiesbaden for a week. He decided upon this almost on the spur of the moment. For a month past he had controlled his own time more strictly than he had ever accepted control of it, and the sense of being free to do exactly what he chose urged him to take full advantage of it. It was an adventure to go abroad, hitherto beyond his opportunities, and he took an absurd pleasure in announcing his decision, in a matter-of-fact way, as if to go to Germany were no more than to go to the Crystal Palace.

Aunt Bertha was a little doubtful about the enterprise. She had never been abroad either, but had heard that you were apt to get robbed if you couldn't speak the language. Aunt Charlotte, also a lifelong stay-at-home, was so taken with the idea that for a time Tony

expected her to announce her intention of going with him. She would almost certainly have done so if he had asked her, for her intrepid soul was equal to any adventure; but she contented herself with begging him to accept ten pounds for the expenses of his trip, and showed herself so pathetically fearful of having her offer refused that he gave her the great pleasure of accepting it. It seemed to him now that he would never have any more trouble about money. He was on the right side for the first time since he had had to arrange his own affairs, and when you were once on the right side the money seemed to come in somehow. He could pay off the rest of his tailor's bill now, instead of waiting for next month's allowance, and still have enough to go away with. He wouldn't have a debt in the world, and would be very careful never again to have one. The relief of being free from the worry of debt was enormous. What a fool he would be if he ever went beyond his income again!

He enjoyed every moment of his journey, in the bright spring weather: the night trip to Flushing; the journey across Holland, with its fascinating towns and villages, and the inhabitants of them just like pictures in a book, and the wonderful colours of the fields of bulbs; and above all the Rhine, so beautiful and so full of romance.

Hatch met him at the station, looking more like a cockney than ever in the German crowd. He had added to his cheerful acceptance of whatever might be happening to him at the moment a calm habit of command, possibly because he considered himself of a superior race, and wished to show it to these foreigners. He addressed

the porter who carried Tony's bag in execrably spoken German, but with a fluency and resource that aroused Tony's admiration, and was obeyed as if he were one of the lords of the earth.

Hatch lived in a *pension* in the Wilhelmstrasse, in more comfort than Tony would have imagined to be within the scope of his purse. Tony's own room, to which he soon retired, faced the Park, and after a night of undisturbed repose he was awakened most blissfully by strains of music. It was the First of May, and at seven o'clock the early-rising music-loving Germans were being regaled with a Chorale, from the open-air orchestra which started its summer programmes on that day and in that way. It gave him a feeling for the ways of German life which he never afterwards lost, even many years later, when their worser qualities had so gained the ascendant as to plunge the world into the bitter chaos of the great war. He sprang up from under his mountainous *duvet* and went to the window. How bright and gay it was, with the trees already dressed in their spring foliage, and the people promenading under them! It was a very delightful thing to be "abroad" for the first time. The life that was as much of the ordinary texture to these solemn promenading Germans as his at home was to him seemed to be made for holiday. The coffee and rolls that were presently served to him, though no substitute for an honest English breakfast, tasted as no coffee and rolls ever tasted at home, and there were other pleasures before him which he must make haste to savour.

It was Sunday morning, and he and Hatch went to

the English Church, as in duty bound, after which the day was free for pleasure. They took theirs in the company of an American lady and her two daughters and a son, who were staying in the pension. "Mrs. Frankland, and Phyllis and Rosemary and Ned." Hatch had waved him towards them collectively, when they had met after church, and introduced him as, "my young friend Tony Dare, one of our most prahminent lady-killers," in obvious imitation of their country's speech, though they did not appear to take it so. Hatch seemed to have made his way with them, and Tony could only hope that any deficiencies in his speech and manners would not have been put down to his account as an Englishman. Rosemary and Ned were twelve and eleven years of age respectively, lively talkative children who had evidently conceived a warm admiration for Hatch, for they hung one on either side of him and tended to monopolize his conversation. Mrs. Frankland was also lively and talkative, and in the latter respect rather overshadowed her daughter, who, however, managed to get in her word occasionally, and didn't seem to mind having it immediately carried away in the stronger current of her mother's speech.

Tony stole a look at her now and then, and found nothing in her not pleasing to the eye. She lacked the roseleaf colouring of English girlhood, but her skin was delicately clear and her features finely cut. She was beautifully dressed, and carried herself with a distinction that was rare among English girls, at least of Tony's acquaintance. Dolly, for instance, who was graceful enough, was not marked by just that inde-

scribable mixture of pride and modesty that gave character to this young girl. But Tony had forgotten all about Dolly for the moment, although her image had borne him company during the whole of his journey, following immediately upon an amicable conversation between them which had raised his hopes high again.

In the afternoon they walked in the pine woods round the Greek Chapel, in the evening they listened to music at the Kursaal. Tony had opportunities of converse with Phyllis Frankland. She was charmingly friendly, in the way of American girls, who suffer from shyness less than their English sisters. By the evening she had taken the place of Dolly in his thoughts, so little had the ardours and miseries of nearly a year really rooted themselves in that quick-productive soil.

CHAPTER XVIII

PREPARATION

Tony's holiday came to an end all too soon. He found life in Wiesbaden so agreeable that he broached the idea to Hatch of sending for his books and continuing his studies there. But Hatch was against it. "You'd be running after Phyllis all the time," he said. "You wouldn't do any work; or at least you wouldn't do enough. It's only because of her that you ever thought about it."

Tony was indignant. Of course he liked Phyllis. He liked all the Franklands; it was jolly to have such people to go about with, especially when Hatch was busy with his own work. As for anything more than that, it was nonsense, and Hatch must know it was nonsense. One of the reasons why he had thought of staying on for a bit was that he thought Hatch liked having him there. If he didn't, let him say so; but what did he want to get him over for?

"That's all my eye," said the cockney Hatch. "It isn't for me you want to stay. Much better go home. You've arranged to work with old Broadbeans, and you ought to keep to it."

"And leave the field clear for you," said Tony to himself, but was ashamed of the thought immediately afterwards. He had been indignant only because Hatch had stripped the humbug off his proposal. Of course it was

because of Phyllis that he wanted to stay on, though he was enjoying the life of the place itself more than he had expected. And as for leaving the field clear for Hatch, he thought he saw that Hatch, who had had the field clear for him for some time already, knew that there was nothing for him in it. He would never give himself away if he could help it. He would go on providing entertainment for Rosemary and Ned, and making himself useful to the whole family, but he would not show himself longing for something that he could never have. There were pride and grit in cockney Hatch, the "awful little cad" who had been accused of pushing himself in everywhere. It had become plain to Tony that the Franklands—or at least Mrs. Frankland and Phyllis—liked Hatch for his good qualities, but no more accepted him as of their own social quality than if they had been English. The only difference was that if they had been English they might not have accepted him in any way. Perhaps this was also plain to Hatch. If so, it made rather a pathetic figure of him, as he exercised his air of cool self-possession, or enchanted Rosemary and Ned with his wit and humour and his always ready companionship.

Then was it a dog-in-the-manger jealousy that made him send Tony away on his appointed day of departure? No, he was right. Tony saw it clearly as he sat in the train, and watched the broad waters of the Rhine, and the castled hills. Whether or no Hatch was sighing in secret for Phyllis, he didn't want her to be the object of one of Tony's facile love affairs, which might very well have happened if he hadn't spoken as he had

a few days before. It hadn't happened. Tony had never tried to make love to Phyllis. He had enjoyed a frank happy companionship with her, which left him with a pleasant batch of memories. She had been effectual in clearing away a lot of sticky stuff that had clogged his mind, and made up a great part of his feeling for Dolly, though not all of it. She had cured him of Dolly, though he did not immediately recognize it. He had never enjoyed any intercourse with Dolly in which love-making had had no part. He had never talked to her of any of the things that interested him, as he had talked so freely to Phyllis, and gained the response of her young eager mind. He had been thinking constantly of Dolly during his journey a week before, but on the journey home he scarcely thought of her at all. He didn't want her any longer. Sometimes in the days of his trials and troubles he had imagined a time when he should no longer be in love with her, and would show it by an attitude that would make her very sorry to have treated him in the way she had. But now he had no inclination of that sort, nor any resentment left for the way she had treated him. He arranged no attitudes for when he should meet her. It was over; but he didn't even tell himself that it was over. The affair of so many months no longer interested him.

There was a moment of slight awkwardness when he first met her after his return. It was at the first of Mrs. Clitheroe's Tuesday parties, and remembrance was too strong to be altogether ignored. She didn't seem to want to ignore it, either. He could not but be aware that there was invitation in her manner, and almost in

her speech. But before many words had passed between them, he knew that the awkwardness was only because he didn't want to show her that his feeling for her was dead, as he knew by this time that it was. Why he didn't want that, he couldn't have told. He fenced with her a little, quite in the old way, but it bored him to have to do it. *She* bored him. Dolly! Was it possible?

She also seemed to bore Duncombe, who came later. He was very little with her, and once Tony, who was making up a set, thought that he shirked playing with her. He went home with Duncombe when the evening was over and smoked a pipe with him. Tony had taken to a pipe lately; for everybody who smoked at all seemed to be smoking pipes at Cambridge, the freshmen elaborate meerschaums which they took a pride in colouring, the older men, who really liked it, seasoned briers.

Tony had gone to Duncombe's rooms before from Mrs. Clitheroe's parties, and never without his mind being full of Dolly. But this time he had not thought of her at all. He had been telling Duncombe about Wiesbaden, and trying to make him see what a good fellow Hatch really was, which Duncombe had said he was quite sure he was. When they got into Duncombe's sitting-room, and the gas was turned up, Tony's eyes went instinctively to the mantelpiece, though he was still not thinking of Dolly. But she no longer smiled invitingly from that commanding position. The frame was still there, but there was another girl in it, nothing like so pretty as Dolly, and a stranger to Tony.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "What have you done with our young friend?"

"Oh, it's come to that, has it?" said Duncombe. "I was rather hoping that you would take her off my hands."

Tony didn't quite like this. If Dolly had shown herself overeager in her pursuit of Duncombe, he had certainly done nothing to discourage her. It didn't seem like him to give her away in that fashion.

"If you've grown tired of her," he said, "I should think you'd only have to let her know."

Duncombe seemed to bethink himself. "Perhaps I ought not to have said that," he said. "I wouldn't have said it to anybody but you, and you certainly wouldn't have minded it a week or two ago."

This was true enough. Tony was able to realize what it would have meant to him a few weeks ago to have Duncombe remove himself from his path. He would have had no objection to the announcement of it, nor to the way in which it might have been made.

"Well, I've recovered," he said. "And I suppose you have too."

"There was never anything to recover from, as far as I was concerned," said Duncombe, now ensconced in an easy chair. "I thought she was a jolly girl, and so she is, and a very pretty one too. Nobody objects to making friends with a pretty girl, I suppose. I always told you there was no more in it that that, didn't I?"

"I don't remember you ever saying so," said Tony. "It would have done me a world of good at the time if you had."

"Well, you always pretended there was nothing in it with you either," said Duncombe, "though of course it was plain enough that there was. You seem to have got

over it pretty quickly. I suppose there's somebody else, isn't there?"

"No," said Tony shortly.

"Oh, well, there is with me. There she is."

He pointed with the stem of his pipe to the photograph on the mantelpiece, at which Tony gazed in an attitude as near to admiration as he could muster. "Tell me about her," he said sympathically, as Duncombe seemed to wish to do so.

Duncombe told him about her. She was a cousin, who had been staying at his father's rectory during the few days he had been there at Easter. He hadn't seen her since she had stayed there ten years before, when they fought together all day and every day, mostly with their tongues, but on occasions, it had to be confessed, with other weapons. The agreeable memory of past struggles had brought them together, and they had found that there was nothing now to fight about, for their unanimity of opinion and taste was quite remarkable.

"I believe she's just as fond of me as I am of her," said Duncombe, "though I haven't asked her. How can a poor devil of a bank clerk tell any girl that he's fond of her?"

Tony would not have been faced with this difficulty, but it seemed natural that Duncombe should be—much more natural than that he should have flirted with Dolly, which, however, he now denied having done at all.

"That's the worst of having relations a lot better off than you are yourself," said Duncombe. "Her father has a big place up in Yorkshire. There are a lot of them, and most of them are girls. Two of them are married already, one to a baronet and one to a fellow in the Rifle

Brigade, who'll have a place of his own by and by. That's the sort of marriage they make. Of course I've no earthly— It's hopeless."

From the point of view of matrimony, it did seem to be so, and matrimony had not so far engaged many of Tony's thoughts. But he respected Duncombe for having that end in view.

"By the by, one of her brothers is going to Cambridge next term," said Duncombe. "He's at Eton now, and going to Trinity. You might look him up. I shall be glad of all the links I can get. If I come and stay with you, as you've asked me to do, I shall try to make pals with him. And perhaps they'll ask me up to Tangley—that's the name of their place. But, good heavens! What chance have I got of going anywhere? A fortnight in summer, and a few Bank Holidays! What a life!"

Poor Duncombe! Here was another person whom Tony had looked up to as being superior to himself, but whose lot was now seen to be far less happy than his own. But he was not inclined to dwell upon his own advantage over Duncombe as he walked home that night; he was wondering what he could do to advance Duncombe's righteous cause. The only thing he could think of was that Duncombe's girl—he hadn't been told her name—was quite likely to be visiting her brother at Cambridge some time or other, and when she did Duncombe should come and stay with him. It would be interesting to see them together. As for taking Dolly off Duncombe's hands, he would have to look after that himself. Tony would have enough to do to let himself down, without hurting her pride in herself.

Neither of them, however, was put to the slightest inconvenience, as affairs turned out. A young man had come to the school as master that term, who had already, if they had only known it, fallen captive to Dolly's undoubted charms. It was not long before she also fell captive to his. He had a little money of hs own, and they were married during the summer holidays. Before Tony went up to Cambridge he and Duncombe had dined with the young bride in her spick and span little house, and she had been quite charming and friendly with them both, and with no trace of embarrassment in her manner. But then she was very much in love with her good-looking young husband, as was made plain by every little speech and look and attitude. Dolly would hunt no more; she had found her quarry.

The people who impressed themselves upon Tony's memories of those months of early summer, more than the Clitheroes, at whose house he was to be found as much as before, more than the Hopwoods, to whom he went more than at any time since his schooldays, were Mr. Broadbent and his family.

He went to Mr. Broadbent for his classical coaching, for two regular hours every week. He sometimes wondered whether Mr. Broadbent would have kept to his promise with him if he had stayed on for a time at Wiesbaden, and not begun with him on the first Tuesday in the term. For this was to be a term's work, and treated as such. Tony soon understood that he was no more to be considered at liberty to excuse himself from one of those hours than if he had been still at school. As for ever being late for the appointment, he remembered

enough of the ferocious impositions of the past not to risk it.

With a month's steady work behind him, in which he seemed to himself not only to have picked up what he had lost since he had left school but to have greatly improved his classical equipment, he had no fear of meeting Mr. Broadbent for the first time, and rather expected to be complimented by him. But in this expectation he was disappointed.

Mr. Broadbent had that view of Cambridge as a sort of inferior Oxford which is to be found among Oxonians of the lesser colleges, and perhaps still more among the members of the greater ones who have come from unimportant schools. But he was an undoubted scholar, though of a limited range, and had a strong sense of fairness, with which he tempered prejudices so overwhelming as to cause him acute discomfort in resisting them. "There is an exact classical school at Cambridge," he told Tony, "which is to be respected, as far as it goes. Bentley and Porson are great names, and there are others. Although you will have finished with the classics, unfortunately, when you have passed this examination, you may just as well pay the University you have chosen the compliment of studying what it holds to be important."

The gist of what followed conveyed no more to Tony's understanding than that Cambridge paid attention to grammar and Oxford to meaning, which was possibly not what was intended, but was just as useful to a candidate for the Little-Go as if it had been. He cheerfully put himself to school again to repair breaches in a wall

that had never been strong at the best of times, and had the satisfaction of knowing that Mr. Broadbent, however much he might deplore his invincible ignorance, was satisfied with the spirit in which he worked. He got on very well with Mr. Broadbent, because, after the beginning, when he had been curiously affected by the remembrance of past severities and asperities, he told himself that old Broadbeans could only have offered to help him because he liked him, and would not want from him the awestruck subjection of the schoolboy. And old Broadbeans didn't, though he would have been quite capable of exercising the domination of the schoolmaster if it had been offered him. They attacked the work that had brought them together in a spirit of mutual respect, and the lighter graces of intercourse were not dispensed with. Their hour was from half past three to half past four, when Mr. Broadbent's form was struggling with the French language under other tuition, and he was free for his private pursuits. That he should have given up those two hours a week to work not different in kind from that in which he had spent his day, especially in summer time, was a proof at least of his kindness of heart, which was not universally acknowledged in view of his public inclemency of manner, and also of that special indulgence for Tony himself which had so gratified him when he had realized that the coaching was to be no mere affair of an occasional consultation, but an unremitting term's work. When he did realize this he wondered whether he ought not to offer to pay for what was after all the work by which Mr. Broadbent made his living. He didn't dare offer to do so himself, but put the question to Stephen,

who put it to his mother, who must have put it to her husband, for the answer came back by reverse channel that nothing of the sort was desired or would be accepted.

So benefit rendered on the one side and gratitude for it on the other brought Tony back into the orbit of Stephen's family, with whom he had had little to do, except with Stephen himself, since the end of his school-days, when he had lived for a time in the care of Mrs. Hawthorne. He sometimes stayed to tea when the work was finished, and was accepted again as in some way belonging to the house.

It was interesting to him to observe Mrs. Broadbent and to notice the differences that had come about in her since he had known her as Mrs. Hawthorne, and not greatly cared for her. She had been stiff and strict in those days, and she had not entirely got rid of either quality. The boys in Broadbent's House didn't like her. It had rather shocked Tony to hear of her being called "old Mother B." Ladies in such a position as hers had to put up with nicknames, but there was no indulgence expressed in this one. Before Mr. Broadbent's marriage the domestic side of the House had been run by a comfortable kindly matron, and Mrs. Broadbent's rule was an unwelcome substitute for hers. But most of those who had passed from one to the other had left the school now, and Tony had gathered that she wasn't as unpopular as she had been. In her private capacity she had mellowed. She was like a woman from whom a weight had been lifted, and the weight had no doubt been one that she had taken upon her own shoulders in trying to live up to the religious standards of her first husband,

of which she had understood the letter better than the spirit. With all her stiffness, she was a woman who was happier giving up her will than imposing it, and there was no doubt who was master in Mr. Broadbent's house. She deferred to him in everything, and his manner towards her was invariably courteous, and not without strange touches of tenderness, which hardly seemed to belong to his character as Tony had conceived of it. This late marriage seemed to have turned out at least as well as most early ones.

Mr. Broadbent's attitude towards Ruth showed tenderness without any disguise. She might have been his own daughter for the way in which he treated her. Ruth was now a quiet, rather shy girl of sixteen. The long fair hair which had been her chief personal attraction in childhood was confined in a thick plait. Nobody could have called her pretty, but there was something attractive in her air of composure, which would become her greatly by and by, and when she smiled something came into her face which transformed it altogether. Tony liked to arouse those smiles, which were not produced for everybody. He had something of a brotherly feeling for Ruth, who had tempered the rigidity of life for him in her mother's house. He thought she admired him, which was incense to him. Perhaps she did, for he had always shown his best side to her, though not always to her mother, nor to Stephen. He could talk to her without effort, and she did not show her shyness to him. When he and Mr. Broadbent had finished their reading they would go into the little enclosed garden attached to Allenby Lodge, and Ruth would come to them when she had

come home from school, though Mrs. Broadbent never appeared before the punctual five o'clock arrival of the tea service. If Mr. Broadbent left them she would sit and talk to Tony in a way to give him a pleasant feeling of companionship, for she wouldn't have done that to any other young man, and yet it seemed quite natural that she should do it with him.

Ruth was going to be an artist. Her talent had developed strongly enough to mark out that course for her. Tony was astonished at the drawings and sketches she showed him, which were far in advance of anything he had arrived at himself, though in his schooldays he had seemed to be much better at it than she, and had thought but little of her performances. She had a love of music too, but no particular skill in it. They had plenty to talk about when they were alone together. She was going to Dresden for her training when she left school, and wanted to hear all about the German life of which Tony had had his short but blissful experience.

"If Dresden is half as jolly as Wiesbaden," he said, "you'll love it. It's all much more amusing than any English town *I* know of, at the seaside or anywhere else. There's that lovely park, with its lake, and its great fountain. You hear it splashing as you're sitting listening to the most delicious music, not like our noisy bands with their Marches and Polkas; and you can drink beer if you want to, but I don't suppose you will. Then you can go to the Opera, every night if you want to, and get a seat for a mark or two. The country all round is lovely. You can see the Greek Chapel from everywhere standing on a hill in the middle of the pines, with its

golden domes. The Rhine isn't far off. It's all so romantic. We went for a long walk, and found an old castle and a jolly little old inn, where the waitresses wore peasant costumes. It's all so gay and cheerful. I'll tell you what, Ruth; when you go to Dresden, Stephen and I will come over in the Long, and we'll go for a walking tour. That's what they do a lot over there, with their knapsacks. Oh, I'm going abroad a lot, now I've been once. It bucks you up like nothing else does."

Tony went abroad again that summer, with Henry and Laura, Henry paying all expenses. They went to Bavaria, Tony having guided their steps in that direction because he had heard from Hatch that the Franklands were spending the summer there. But unfortunately they had changed their minds, and had gone to Switzerland, where Laura had first wanted to go because she "knew the country." Bavaria, however, was a great success, Munich even more delightful than Wiesbaden, and the country through which they slowly made their way of never-failing charm. For this expedition, which lasted a month, Tony gave up a visit to Mrs. Clitheroe, who had taken a house for the month of August at Newquay, a visit to Duncombe's home, another week on the Broads, which Stephen had projected this time with his Cambridge friends, and above all a visit to Scotland, where the Hopwoods had taken a moor, and where he would have had his first experience of grouse-driving. He would have postponed an immediate renewal of his going abroad on these several accounts, but felt it incumbent upon him to keep Henry company, and was glad that he had done so. Henry had not much enjoyed his holiday

of the previous year, but he did enjoy this one. He dropped the City magnate entirely, and was human and simple, and as pleased with everything they did and everything they saw as Tony himself. And Laura was "nice" too. She had decided to "go in for photography." It was before the days of universal Kodaks, but Tony carried her camera about for her and became expert in disentangling and directing its legs, which were rather like those of Cousin Feenix in their tendency to take an undesired course of their own. She took a great many photographs and looked forward to developing them herself, in the dark-room that Henry had undertaken to fit up for her at home. She was kept busy and amused during the expedition, and there was some revival of the spirit of comradeship between her and Henry, which had seemed almost to have come to an end.

Tony spent the last weeks of his holiday at St. Leonards, polishing up his work, and went up to Cambridge early in October with the liveliest anticipations of pleasure to come.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FRESHMAN

In spite of his long anticipations, and the experiences he had already had—for he had spent another week-end with Stephen in the May term—the "going up" for the first time struck Tony with all the force of an ardent wish now at last fulfilled. No need to pretend any longer as he went in under the gateway of St. Hugh's in the October gloaming, and added his contribution to the pile of luggage with which the porters were dealing, and then on to the rooms that had been assigned to him. He was as much a member of the college now as Stephen, or any of the others who had come up by the same train, or had come up before, and were filling the courts which had been so quiet for the last four months with the noise of their greetings.

His rooms were for the moment his overmastering excitement. They were on Staircase B, opposite to those which he had occupied of Sumner's, and exactly like them, except that some previous occupant had had the paint scraped off the panelling and the oak stained, which made them still more attractive. This was in the days when taste ran to "old oak," and the furniture dealers were busy carving crude designs upon any genuine piece they could lay their hands on, and hastily knocking up pieces of their own when the supply failed them. They always stained their productions, whether new or old,

for the idea had got abroad that old oak wasn't old oak unless it was nearly black, and Tony was quite satisfied with his dark panelling.

He had been lucky to get these rooms not many weeks before, in place of the attic like Stephen's which had been first offered him. They had been taken by the "lord" who had rowed in Stephen's boat, and who had decided during the Long Vacation that he wouldn't come up to Cambridge again, but would get married instead. They were expensive rooms, and the "bloods" who occupied their like were already accomodated. But the fifteen pounds extra a year was a small matter to Tony, with whom his surroundings counted for so much that he would have economized on almost anything to be able to install himself in this fashion.

It had given him the keenest delight to arrange for their furnishing. He had some things of his own, which Henry had saved for him out of the sale of their father's furniture, and Henry had given him a cheque for whatever else was necessary. He had also saved up a respectable sum of his own, for he was going to do the thing well, and had been buying here and there all the summer. The ordinary run of mankind had not yet begun to ransack furniture shops for bargains, unless it was in "old oak," or in china. The name of Chippendale was hardly known to them, and the name of Sheraton not at all. Tony was no exception. If he had had plenty of money he would have gone in for old oak with the best of them, but as he hadn't he went in for furniture that was "old-fashioned," partly because it was much cheaper than new furniture, partly because he liked it better. It was an

odd collection of good things and very ordinary things that he found roughly disposed about his rooms when he entered them, but his natural taste was good, and he had chosen nearly everything himself, so it was already, in its state of chaos, with packing cases all about it, the most exciting room that he had ever been in.

He and Stephen began to unpack and arrange at once, while the bedmaker, Mrs. Blott, called Blott-on-the-Circumstances for short, hovered about and made herself amiable to a new employer who, to judge by the extent of his possessions, might make it generally worth her while to be so. She had took his commons into Mr. Sumner's rooms, she explained, and laid his tea there, as his things wasn't unpacked yet and Mr. Sumner wasn't coming up till the next day. This suggestion of mutual accommodation pleased Tony. He had seen Sumner during his second visit to Stephen and liked the look of him, though he had not spoken to him, nor indeed to any of the indubitable bloods of the college, having lived entirely with Stephen's set. It was an added attraction to these rooms that Stephen had said of them: "You'll have all the bloods calling on you there," though he had disguised his satisfaction at hearing it. He wanted to know everybody in the college, and to share in all the fun that was going. Some of Stephen's friends, who were nearly all Scholars, seemed to accept a position of inferiority to the more elaborate-living set, and even Stephen made it plain that their ways were not his ways. Tony had been a little afraid of being identified with Stephen's set to begin with, and this wouldn't have suited him at all.

They unpacked the pots and pans and crockery first

of all, as Mrs. Blott seemed to expect it of them. Laura had busied herself over this, and made it all "her present," to the saving of Tony's purse over things that it wouldn't have been amusing to buy. He would have preferred cups and saucers with the St. Hugh's arms on them, but had no complaint to make of her taste otherwise. The table glass had been bought in Munich, as an additional present; it was ugly stuff of a dirty green, with nobs and bosses all over it, but highly considered by Laura, who had paid a lot of money for it, because other people wouldn't have anything like it. Tony had also made purchases abroad. The chief of them was a collection of beer tankards, which he disposed in a line on the mantelpiece. The odds and ends of things he had bought for decoration gave him more amusement in their arranging than the furniture. He had a few pictures from home, and had acquired a set of sporting prints, not having had much experience of sport yet, but because they were the sort of thing that looked well. The chaos was soon reduced. When everything was unpacked there wasn't a great deal to arrange, and they had finished everything but the hanging of the pictures before it was time for Hall. Tony regarded the nearly finished room with untold satisfaction. It was better than he had imagined, better, he thought, than Sumner's room over the way, and his to live in for the next three years, which seemed like a lifetime.

He put on cap and gown for the first time, and joined the crowd going to Hall. In so small a college there was little dividing up into years, and he sat with Stephen and his friends, many of whom he knew by this time. They

formed the largest group, and nearly filled one of the tables. At the other the so-far unattached freshmen congregated at one end, while the bloods gathered at the other. But the bloods did a good deal of dining in their own rooms and each other's, and put off coming up until the last moment. There were only five of them in Hall on this first evening, three of them freshmen, blood-cubs as one of Tony's neighbours called them, already known, from school or otherwise, to their elders. All five were sedate and almost subdued in their gentlemanly behaviour. This was one of the marks of the blood. He behaved himself with irreproachable propriety on public occasions, though not always on others. There was a tendency among the herd, to which he held himself superior, to maltreat caps and gowns, which with the rowdier elements were so battered and shredded as to have lost their resemblance to the original article. The men who had no ambition to show themselves daring fellows, the smugs, as they were apt to be labelled, preserved the hems of their gowns and the stiffening in their caps; extremes meeting, so did the bloods, who took other means of showing themselves daring fellows.

These and other minutiæ of bearing and habit Tony had yet to learn. He was inclined to be a little ashamed of his new cap and gown, and was surprised to see that those worn by the bloods, two of whom were in their third year, were almost as fresh-looking as his own. One of them was Hibbert, of whom Stephen had told him amusing stories. He was Master of the Drag, a hero of the University steeplechase course at Cottenham, and a Polo blue, or half blue. He had celebrated his first victory at

Cottenham by buying a gross of candles, with coloured shades to match them, and planting them in a well thought-out design in a flower-bed opposite the Master's Lodge.

But pranks in college were not encouraged by the bloods of St. Hugh's. The Master was considered an old sportsman, for he didn't enquire too closely into their scholastic progress as long as they kept quiet and didn't interfere with the amenities of life for the dons, or with the undergraduates who had come to St. Hugh's with the idea of doing a certain amount of reading. The dons followed his lead. There were some old gentlemen among them, relics of a past age, who had never adopted the modern idea of the University being primarily for the undergraduate, and considered him rather a nuisance, whether he read or whether he rode. There were three of them dining in Hall that night, ancient figures in rusty gowns, the like of whom was soon to disappear. None of them was known except by name to any of the men of whom Tony, insatiable to know everything about everybody, made enquiry. They never taught anything and never seemed to produce anything, and took no interest whatever in all the thronging interests of undergraduate Cambridge. And yet they had all been figures in University life, and each of them when he came to die would fill his place in the books of Reminiscence. These fossilized specimens were getting scarcer every year; they were perhaps more in evidence in St. Hugh's than in other colleges, because the old traditions still lingered there, and it was a comfortable place for them to live in; but the younger dons who did have officially to do with the undergraduates also had their centre of interest in

their own combination room, and as long as their peace was not disturbed left the younger members of the college very much to their own devices.

Late that night Tony sat in front of his dying fire, and tried to gather up for himself the feelings with which at last he found himself embarked upon the life he had so much and for so long desired. He wanted only to capture the full sense of his satisfaction in being where he was, but other thoughts came unbidden. He saw dimly that what he would have called the romance of University life, what indeed was romance to him, would not last for ever. Something else would have to take its place if he was to get full satisfaction out of the three years in front of him. What was it to be? He did not ask himself the question, but he had a momentary clear vision of the lives of some of those who were to be his companions. He felt vaguely dissatisfied with himself when he thought of Stephen, whom he knew better than any of them, not so much because of the possibility of his distinguishing himself in a way that would make his name known to everybody, but because of the steady course he pursued, which made satisfaction in his immediate surroundings of little importance to him. He thought of Hibbert and of Sumner, who no doubt took the pleasures of Cambridge life in much the same spirit as he was inclined to himself, and at that moment it seemed to him that their life from day to day would not necessarily contain more satisfaction than that of Stephen, or of other workers, and for him would certainly involve risks that might spoil his satisfaction in it altogether. He thought of Cowell and Fenton, two of Stephen's partic-

ular friends, who had come up from country Grammar Schools with no other design but a First Class, and were living laborious days, but days full of satisfaction, as their talk showed, because every day they were getting a little nearer to their end. It was a great thing to have *any* aim in front of you and to set yourself to attain it.

He saw all this as he sat by the fire, but his mood was not one of resolution, or he might have captured something of value to himself out of it, and the story of his Cambridge days might have been different. He roused himself and went to bed, as the Chapel clock struck one, with a last look round at the room in which he was going to have such happy times, and when he awoke next morning to find the October sun streaming in through his yet uncurtained windows those reflections had faded from his mind, and left no trace behind them.

Although the social side of University life was Tony's chief pre-occupation, it had hardly yet occurred to him that there were men who went to Cambridge with no other object than to pass three years there amusing themselves, some of them even without intending to read for a degree. The majority of those who went to Oxford or Cambridge from Hilbury School did so with scholarships or exhibitions, and read for Honours. Most of them too put organized games and sports in the second place, and spent their days largely between the two interests. The hard workers gave up even their evenings, and few would have left evening work out of their programmes altogether. During his first term, Tony would not have felt comfortable unless he had risen betimes, spent his mornings either at lectures or reading in his own rooms, and

his afternoons on the river, to which, following Stephen's example, he had taken instead of to the football field.

It was unfortunate that he had not taken both parts of his Little-Go before coming up, as he might have done, for the work for it had been done, and he lost ground, if anything, by the end of the term, though some of his lectures and some of his reading were given to still further preparation. He started reading Law with some zest, but he was actually the only undergraduate at St. Hugh's who was reading for the Tripos; he had no supervision inside the college, and very little outside, and he could not devote his whole attention to it because of the examination to come at the end of the term, upon other subjects. He was pulled between two opposing forces, the habit of regular work at regular hours, which he had strengthened for himself in his own reading during the summer, and the sense of freedom to do pretty much what he liked; but for the first term, at any rate, the habit of work was the stronger, and he seldom idled at any time during the morning, though the hours given to his books in the evenings gradually dwindled.

It was unfortunate too that he had taken to the river. He had seemed at first to have some aptitude as an oar, but it was no more than the quick adaptibility which marked him in most exercises. It was enough to carry him through the first stages, with some expectation of success to salt the weary grind; but before the end of the term he had given up all hope of emulating Stephen's prowess, an ambition which he had been careful to keep to himself, and now saw to have been rather absurd. Having committed himself to rowing, however, he went

through with it until the end of the term, and the discipline was no doubt good for him.

For his first term, then, he trod the road of the average undergraduate, working in the morning, and as often as not for an hour or two in the evening, and going down to the river every afternoon, and finished up by taking two Seconds in the Little-Go, which was quite a respectable performance, though he was disappointed at not getting at least one First.

Socially he fell rather between two stools, and it was perhaps unfortunate again that he had chosen a college like St. Hugh's, where most of the men were either one thing or the other, and there was little mixing. The bloods lived almost as much with their fellow bloods of other colleges as in their own, and as far as St. Hugh's was a social entity it was confined to the reading men, although it took its reputation in the University from the minority who treated it as hardly more than a residential convenience.

These were the days of little formalities of custom and observance closely followed by the great mass of undergraduates. One of them was the system of "calling." A senior man would drop his card on a freshman whom he wished to recognize. The freshman must return his call, but not by leaving his card; he must call and call until he found the other in. Then the acquaintance was formally inaugurated. Practically the whole college called upon Tony except the bloods, and not one of them did. This was only because the system of calling did not hold with them, either at St. Hugh's or any other college, and was already beginning to drop out among some who would

have laid no claim to bloodship. But Tony didn't know that. He thought that he was being cold-shouldered, although he soon had a nodding acquaintance with the gilded set, and none of them gave themselves any airs of superiority over him. Stephen took all this for granted. They weren't hostile to you in any way; only you were different. But Tony didn't feel himself to be different, or at least not to that extent. He showed a proud spirit, or what he considered to be so. If they didn't want to know him he didn't want to know them, and even with the blood-cubs he was stand-offish, though one of them especially, who went to some of the same lectures, showed a disposition to be friendly. He was an engaging youth, very slight and fair, with a continual flow of bubbling conversation, not entirely confined to equine matters, which, however, were his chief preoccupation. He was the only son of a rich new peer, who had apparently put his wealth at his disposal, for he had set up a racing stable at Newmarket, and was spending money in other ways hitherto beyond anything that Tony had ever heard of for a boy of his age. Peter Yardley his name was, and there was no harm in him, except what was being fostered by the unwisdom of his noble parent. Tony was attracted to him, but wouldn't respond to his advances beyond a certain point, because he was afraid of being considered a tufthunter. And Yardley didn't press him beyond that point, having the whole field of blood-dom to disport himself in both inside St. Hugh's and outside of it.

Yardley was of so lively and sportive a disposition that it seemed unlikely that he would get through the three years of his Cambridge course without getting into

trouble with the authorities. Sumner was a blood of a different variety. He also thought largely in terms of horse, but his fervor was for hunting, not for the race-course. He wouldn't have called himself a blood at all, and didn't belong to the Athenæum, which was the blood's club, not to be confounded with the establishment of the same name in London, to which it was not even affiliated. Sumner was reserved and a little stiff in manner. Unlike the majority of his associates, he took little interest in his raiment; his clothes were usually of what was called the pepper and salt mixture, and he might have been taken anywhere for a quiet scholar, except when he appeared on horseback, when all the little hints about him were seen to refer to a steady serious pursuit of sport and not of learning. He kept one horse at Cambridge, and hunted one day a week with the Fitzwilliam or the Cambridgeshire or the Puckeridge, and went out sometimes with the Drag. On other days he ran with the Trinity beagles, or if no hunting of any sort was available, spent his afternoon "hacking" sometimes in company, sometimes by himself. These pursuits came first, but after them, and before the sociabilities which took up so much of the time of those with whom he chiefly consorted, came his reading. Tony was surprised to learn after a time that he was "going out," as the phrase went among the reading men, in Theology. Sumner was a younger son, destined for a family living. He was so true to type that he could be foreseen, even at the age of twenty, as the sober sporting parson who might very well add to his repute that of a diligent overseer of his flock, though at

present he held himself aloof from the activities of the religious-minded undergraduates of whatever school.

Tony had thought at first that Sumner rather liked him. They had been in one another's rooms over the small domestic affairs that arise between men living on the same staircase, but none of Sumner's appearances could have been translated into a "call," such as Tony had got it into his head must inaugurate intercourse between a senior and a junior man, and he became stand-offish to Sumner too whenever he met him on the staircase or about the college. He thought Sumner looked down upon him, and began to feel rather resentful towards him, and towards the whole company of bloods, the more blatant of whom seemed to look down upon ninety-nine-hundredths of the University, although they did little for it themselves.

With the bulk of the St. Hugh's men Tony got on very well, but found nobody among them who called forth the response of friendship which he was so ready to give. He would not have thought that the years he had spent in the world would make him feel older than the men of his own age who had come straight from school to Cambridge. He had thought of them living a more advanced life than himself, and had expected to be able to pick it up on equal terms with them. But even with the men of Stephen's year, who were exactly his contemporaries, there was a lot of the schoolboy left, and some of the freshmen seemed to him hardly more than uninteresting children. His three years' work in the City had left scarcely any traces on his mind, and its place was taken by the work he was doing now, which suited him far

better. But during those years he had moved on in other ways, more perhaps than he might have done if there had been no interregnum. There was nobody at St. Hugh's to whom he wanted to talk about literature or art or any of the interests he had evolved for himself. It was more a negative than a positive deprivation, for he did not tell himself that it was this that he missed, or that his life lacked salt because he had scarcely any intellectual companionship. Nor did he ever tell himself that he was disappointed in Cambridge, even when the novelty of it had worn off, rather sooner than he had anticipated. He did, however, after his happy summer, when he had been free to go where he would, feel himself unexpectedly confined, and took an *exeat* in the middle of the term to spend a Sunday at St. Leonards. This served to put him right for the rest of it, but he found himself going down for the Christmas vacation with almost as much pleasure as if he had been entering upon a holiday after a school term.

CHAPTER XX

FERRARS

Duncombe paid his first visit to Tony early in the Lent Term. Tony wrote a note to Duncombe's cousin, Ferrars of Trinity, asking him to lunch on Saturday. Ferrars of Trinity was unfortunately engaged for that meal but invited Tony and Duncombe to dine with him at Guest Hall "after which we might go to the Musical Club," he wrote, "if you and Herbert feel inclined." Tony had never heard of the Musical Club, but did feel inclined. Both his music and his painting were in abeyance at this time; there was nobody at St. Hugh's whose taste soared above the popular songs of the day, with Gilbert and Sullivan as the high-water mark. If Jack Ferrars was musical, and he and Tony became friends, which was what Duncombe wanted, for reasons of his own, something might come of this meeting.

They went to Ferrars' rooms in Jesus Lane, and received a friendly greeting from an amiable fair-haired giant whom Tony had noticed rowing in a Third Trinity boat, and had wondered who he was. They walked together on wet pavements, reflecting the glimmer of flickering gas-lamps, through Whewell's Court and under the great gateway of Trinity, Ferrars towering half a head above either of them, walking with a sort of springy slouch, his hands in his pockets, his full Trinity gown blowing about him. He talked to his cousin as if he had

known him all his life, and mention of his sister was not absent from his talk. Tony could detect the change in Duncombe's voice as he answered him, though Ferrars could not have been aware of it. He found himself taking a liking to Ferrars, who had such a pleasant likeable way with him. But it wouldn't do to expect too much from it. Some of the bloods of St. Hugh's had that open friendly way, but it didn't mean that they wanted to know you any better. Tony had the subject of bloods a little on his brain. There was nothing to show that Ferrars was one, except that he came from Eton, as most of the fraternity at St. Hugh's did. He had not yet learnt that in the larger colleges various interests shaded off into one another, and the labels he was inclined to stick on to everybody would only belong to comparatively few.

The great Hall of Trinity, with as many dons dining at the two high tables as there were undergradutes at St. Hugh's, and the crowd of blue-gowned men at the three lower tables, was something entirely new to Tony. He had imbibed a little of the small college jealousy of Trinity, which showed itself in belittling it wherever it was possible, and sometimes where it was not. But the tangible signs of its greatness could not but affect his impressionable mind. In mere numbers it so far excelled all other colleges that this was the third dinner to be served in Hall every evening. The ordinary criticism against Trinity was that its numbers were its greatest drawback. Unless you were a person of outstanding achievement you got swamped in the crowd. But the babel of talk that arose from all the groups at all the

tables seemed rather to show that among so many there was something in the way of companionship and friendship to suit everybody, unless he was of so morose or diffident a nature that he could have been suited nowhere.

Ferrars, sitting between Tony and Duncombe, talked sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, when they were not all three talking together. He knew men at St. Hugh's. He had been in the same House at Eton as Yardley, and was amused at the way in which he had developed from a cheerful little nobody at school into the archetype of University bloods. "It's all money," he said. "It ought not to count for as much up here as it does. Still, Yardley's all right really. Do you know Hawthorne?"

Tony was rather surprised at the question. Stephen had seemed to go back a little in reputation as an oar. He had rowed very well in the St. Hugh's May boat the year before, and the great powers had taken notice of him. Then he had rowed in Trials, which was already a substantial achievement; but though he had been tried once or twice in the University boat at the beginning of the term nothing further had come of it. But it was because of his rowing that Ferrars knew about him. The President was a Third Trinity man, and a friend of his. "He's very rough," said Ferrars, "and hasn't polished up as much as he might have done. But next year! You mark my words."

Tony asked Ferrars about the Musical Club, and acknowledged in answer to a question that he played the piano a bit. "Then you ought to belong," Ferrars said. "It's one of the jolliest things here, if you're keen on

music, as I am. I can't play—at least nothing to write home about; but I'm a warbler. I'm going to tip 'em 'The Erl-King' to-night. Rather nervy, eh? But I'm nothing if I'm not that. Still, I'm glad to see Hannaford dining at High Table. He sometimes comes on, but if he does to-night, my little effort will be over."

Hannaford was the Professor of Music, and an illustrious composer. Ferrars pointed him out, and some other dons of distinction, laying more stress upon their personal peculiarities, so far as he knew them, than upon their claims to renown. "I shouldn't mind being a don myself," he said. "They do 'emselves proud, and they needn't do any work unless they like. Work's the curse of this place, don't you think so, Dare? I hate work; always did and always shall. I wish I was one of the idle rich, don't you, Herbert?"

Duncombe said he did.

The Musical Club, to which they repaired after Hall, met in a large room in the Market Place, and was now filled with men and tobacco smoke. There was a good concert of Chamber Music, all the performers being undergraduates or younger dons. Tony was surprised at the high level they attained. The pianist especially he thought as good as any professional, but Ferrars laughed at him, and said that there were many better. Tony had heard little classical music. Ferrars seemed to know a good deal about it, and was evidently a genuine enthusiast, for his talk was no longer the stream of light prattle that he had been pouring out in such profusion.

There were two singers that evening, and Ferrars was

the second of them. Tony began to feel nervous when his time approached. He might know about music, but it seemed unlikely that, at his age, and with his happy-go-lucky way, he would be able to satisfy such an assembly as this with such a song as "The Erl-King." Why hadn't he chosen something simpler? No doubt he had a good voice, or he wouldn't be singing here at all; but you wanted more than a good voice for songs of that sort.

But somehow the moment he got up to sing Tony knew that it would be all right. The large loose figure seemed to gather itself together, the good-natured boyish face took on a look of seriousness and self-possession. And when the tumultuous introduction had run its course, what a voice it was that burst in and took up the strain! round and full and clear, with a *timbre* in it that pierced right through to the heart.

It could hardly be expected that so young a singer would give full dramatic feeling to such a song, but even to Tony's inexperienced ears it was plain that this was not the ordinary singing of a young man with a fine voice. Ferrars had said that he hated work, but he couldn't have sung like that unless he had taken great pains about it. Enthusiastic applause greeted his effort, and Tony thought he caught sight through the blue haze of smoke of the quizzical face of Professor Hannaford in the doorway. But if he had looked in just in time to hear Ferrars sing he must have gone away again immediately, for Tony didn't see him in the room afterwards. Ferrars had to sing another song, and before he came back to the corner in which they were sitting Duncombe told Tony that his cousin Lilian had said that Jack

wanted to be a professional singer, but his people were against it. He had forgotten it until that moment. "But they won't be able to stop him if he's as good as that," he said.

Ferrars put Tony up for the Musical Club, and introduced him to some of its members that evening. He seemed to be the kind of person who liked doing things for people. He invited Duncombe to spend Easter at Tangley, but warned him that it might be rather dull. Duncombe said he didn't suppose he should find it so, and would be delighted to come.

Tony now became an ardent musician again, with an ambition to excel as a pianist. He had considerable facility, and had once or twice before had a burst of practising scales and exercises, so that he might play really well. But there had always been difficulties in the way of steady application. Now he could practise regularly for two or three hours every afternoon or evening. He had given up rowing, and after playing football a few times found that the desire for that form of exercise had left him. He would go and run at Fenner's sometimes, or find somebody to go for a walk with him. Then he would come back, sport his oak and play the piano. But this didn't last very long. There were so many who were better at it than he; in the weekly concerts at the Club there was always somebody to be found who by some unexplained means had acquired a technique which he couldn't hope to equal if he practised all day. What he could do was to play accompaniments, and he could do that without an arduous course of practice. Ferrars was always glad of his assistance, and he

came to be his regular accompanist. He was in demand with other singers too, and played with violinists and cellists. It wasn't always very amusing to be stuck down to the piano to play something over and over which he only wanted to play once, but it was worth it for the companionships it brought him. The members of the Club were of all colleges, and his circle was enlarged from the beginning.

He became more intimate with Ferrars than with anybody except Stephen, and after this new start his intimacy with Stephen tended more and more to confine itself to the times when they were alone together. They breakfasted and lunched in one another's rooms, and went for a walk and sometimes to King's Chapel on Sunday afternoons; but with the hours he devoted to his reading and his rowing Stephen hadn't much time left for sociabilities, and had few friends outside his own college. He and his associates would get together at tea, or at coffee after Hall, and rag and talk shop, which was all that Stephen seemed to want in the way of social recreation. Tony had become rather tired of it, and was now more often out of college than in during his hours of leisure, which gradually absorbed his afternoons and evenings.

Ferrars was two quite distinct people. He was the serious musician with the circle of friends like-minded with himself, and he was the light-hearted company-loving undergraduate with another entirely different circle, made up mostly of his old schoolfellows. Tony found the second more amusing than the first. His love of music was genuine as far as it went, but it didn't go so far as that of these enthusiasts. He preferred an eve-

ning of talk and laughter and light songs to an evening of solid music, which was sometimes very solid, and not very musical, when the second-rate string-players got together and rasped through their quartets and trios, and the second-rate singers produced their Schubert and their Brahms and set them down on the piano for him to play.

Ferrars was popular with everybody and attracted all sorts to him. Among Tony's friends in his own college, and his old schoolfellows scattered about other colleges, a Blue was a sort of demigod, and even a potential Blue, such as Stephen, was a friend to be proud of; but there were Blues to be met in Ferrars's rooms, now and then one of resounding fame, none of whom exalted themselves above their fellows. And there were social lights besides, whose conversation was much more entertaining than that of the overgrown schoolboys with whom Tony had consorted hitherto. He thought he had made a mistake in going to St. Hugh's; there would have been a very much wider field for him at Trinity. But he found, much to his gratification, that St. Hugh's was considered a college that anybody might go to. These estimates change from generation to generation; at that time there were hardly half a dozen colleges counted among the elect. It was not all of Ferrars's musical friends who would have been accepted as fit associates by the rest of them. But the others were genial enough among themselves, and Tony got on very well with them.

Ferrars asked him as well as Duncombe to spend Easter at Tangley. It was the first time that he had ever stayed in a large country house. He and Duncombe travelled up together on Thursday evening, for Dun-

combe couldn't get away from his work an hour or half an hour earlier than usual. All the world seemed to be on the rail at that particular time, and they had a long tiring tedious journey. But once arrived, it was all brightness and gaiety, and to Tony luxury hitherto unknown.

There were half a dozen other guests in the house, as well as one of the married daughters, with her husband and two babies, but the house wasn't nearly full. It was twice as large as Merstead Hall, with which Tony compared all country houses. He could see the great bulk of it as they drove up across half a mile of park to the pillared portico, with an inconceivable mass of solid masonry stretching away on either side of it. It was nearly ten o'clock when they arrived and were immersed in the company playing billiards and sitting about an inner hall. In a few minutes they were dining in another great hall, with Ferrars and two of his sisters to keep them company, and a butler and two footmen to attend to their simple wants.

The family consisted of Colonel and Lady Edith Farrars, three sons, of whom Jack was the youngest, and six daughters, two of them married. Jack and the four unmarried daughters were of a second family, some years younger than the other four. Evelyn was the eldest of them; then came Jack a year younger, then Lilian, then Pamela and Audrey, still in the schoolroom, but at the moment, it was to be hoped, in their beds. Duncombe, abating his reserve, had talked about Lilian, coming down in the train, and Tony's attention was engaged by her as they ate and drank and all talked at once. Her photograph, which had been taken at her earliest grown-

up stage, did her nothing like justice. If not so conspicuously pretty as Dolly, with whom he had compared her, she was quite pretty enough for all practical purposes. Duncombe had said indulgently that she talked nineteen to the dozen, which saved a lot of trouble when you were feeling lazy yourself. This had rather chilled the appreciation Tony was ready to give her, but he had not thought of her talk being like that of her brother, an amusing ripple with a clear happiness of mind underlying it, breaking readily into laughter, and always inviting response. No wonder that Duncombe had fallen in love with her, and immediately dispossessed Dolly's photograph in favour of hers. Dolly with all her prettiness would have seemed a mannered self-conscious chit beside this bright natural girl. Tony was half in love with her himself before they had "topped up" their very late dinner, on Jack's suggestion, with another glass of port each. But though he was anxious to acquit himself so as to deserve the liking she was ready to offer so frankly to a friend of her brother's he had no idea of setting up another rivalry to Duncombe. He couldn't catch any sign of Duncombe's tender feeling for her being returned, but for frank cousinship she met him on equal terms. Duncombe showed higher spirits than Tony had ever known in him. That part of him which owned kinship with these Ferrars relations came out during this visit. Everybody liked him, but nobody but Tony, not even Jack, seemed to have any idea of the special attraction that had brought him there.

Jack's elder sister Evelyn seemed to be the only one of the family with anything like his love of music. She

had a charming voice, and they sang duets together, Tony accompanying them and accompanying her too in the songs she sang, and gaining applause for his readiness, which was grateful to him. Colonel Ferrars, in almost the only conversation he had with him, told him that he hardly knew one tune from another, and seemed to be unaccountably proud of it. "Jack gets it from his mother's side," he said. "You must have met old Billy Porteous. No, he must have died before your time; he was an older man than I am. He wrote that song 'What a Pair of Whiskers!' which everybody was singing when I was a young fellow. Jack makes a lot of noise when he sings. I suppose it's all right. People seem to like it. But I must say I shouldn't care for a son of mine to come out as a fellow singing for money. If you've got any influence with Jack, Dare, I hope you'll do all you can to put him off that idea."

Tony was in a quandary. His inclination was to agree with everything that his host said. He was a little nervous with him. Colonel Ferrars, in spite of his natural friendliness, was very much *grand seigneur*, and impressed himself. But Tony thought he owed something to his friend, and said: "All the people who know say that Jack has one of the finest voices that has been, sir, and it would be a pity not to use it."

"Oh, use it!" said Colonel Ferrars. "Nothing'll stop him using it. There's twice as much noise in the house when he's at home. Not that I mind that. I like to hear the young uns give tongue. And Jack's a dear good boy. I've got a nice little job waiting for him here when he's finished what they call his education. He can go

into the Estate Office, and by and by he can look after the property. That'll keep him here, and he'll have all the fun he wants. I should like to keep one of them here. Who have you heard say that Jack's as good as all that?"

Tony hadn't heard anybody say it except his and Jack's Cambridge friends, but he knew that Professor Hannaford had said that his voice was worth training, and produced his name as a trump card.

"Well, I suppose he knows," said Colonel Ferrars, rather grudgingly, "though I can't say I've ever heard of him. Lady Kircaldy says so. She's always going on about it."

The Countess of Kircaldy was one of Tony's fellow-guests. She had a box at the Opera, and had given Tony an invitation to it, to be put into effect during the coming season. No doubt her word would have weight. Colonel Ferrars didn't seem to be quite so determined that Jack shouldn't have his way as he professed to be. As for Lady Edith, everything that her children did or didn't do seemed to suit her. Tony had an idea that she wasn't entirely blind to what might be springing up between Duncombe and Lilian. He was probably wrong in this, or at least in the idea that she would not discourage it if it showed itself. Duncombe himself was more likely to judge Lilian's parents aright in that respect. He was made welcome to the house and given freedom with his cousin just because he could never be looked upon in the light of a suitor.

Lady Edith, however, displayed a very kindly feeling for Duncombe. "His grandmother was my aunt," she said. "She was an old darling. Herbert has a little of

the look of her. I wish his father wasn't so miserably poor, but he was very handsome as a young man and Bella insisted upon marrying him."

It had not occurred to Tony that Herbert's father was miserably poor, though according to the standards of Tangley it was understandable that he should appear so, and Herbert's present situation might have lent colour to the idea. But that had not, apparently, struck Lady Edith. "As he is going to be a banker," she said, "I suppose he will be very rich some day. All the bankers I have ever known are, but they have to work very hard for it. I think Herbert works much too hard for a young man. Fancy his having to go away from here on Monday afternoon, because he must be at his bank early on Tuesday morning! If he weren't getting on so well I think I should ask my husband to get him something else to do. I'm sure he could if he tried. I should like to do something for Bella's boy, now that we have come together again after all these years. Lilian and I met her in the Park, you know, last summer, and really she looked just as sweet as ever, and not at all as if she regretted having married her good-looking curate that we used to tease her about. I was quite glad that Lilian should go and stay with her. I should have gone myself, as she asked me, if I hadn't had so many engagements. I've tried to get her here, but she won't come."

Tony said that he didn't think Herbert's present job held out such prospects that he wouldn't be glad to exchange it for a better one, and Lady Edith said that she should certainly speak to her husband about it. Nothing, however, came of this before Duncombe left, and he told

Tony that Colonel Ferrars wasn't in the way of being able to get him a job, but that the kindly interest Lady Edith took in him was more than he had expected. He would be seeing them when they went up to London, and that was all he wanted for the present.

Tony stayed at Tangley for two days after Duncombe had gone and then went back to Hilbury. He was feeling a little above himself because of the company he had been keeping. Henry showed an interest in everything he had to tell him, but produced for his warning a proverb about brass pots and copper pots. Laura's attitude was that of one to whom such houses as Tangley had been open to her since her birth, and nothing could be told her about the way of life in them that wasn't part of her own experience. She brought into the conversation casual mention of Lord and Lady Cheddar, who had been staying in one of the hotels to which she and Henry had gone on their first trip abroad. This was apparently to balance Lady Kircaldy, and other titles that occurred in Tony's account of his doings, and the people he had met. Laura wasn't to be impressed by "that sort of thing." It seemed almost as if she held herself above these people *because* they had titles.

CHAPTER XXI

THE "L. B."

One evening early in the May term Tony was in Ferrars's rooms when Frere and Denton came in. They were Trinity men in their second year, who "kept" together in a double set of rooms in the Great Court, and were hardly ever seen apart. They usually walked about arm in arm, and were known as the Siamese Twins.

Frere and Denton had conceived the idea of starting a paper, to be called ambitiously "The Light Blue," and some assistance was required of Ferrars, which they had come to explain to him.

"Fred," said Frere, referring to Denton, "wants an organ for his caricatures, which are very good."

"And Roger," said Denton, referring to Frere, "wants an organ for his personalities, which are highly offensive. There's room for a paper that will tell the truth about everybody, and perhaps a trifle more than the truth."

"We don't propose," said Frere, "to ignore the more serious forms of University enterprise, and are collecting an unrivalled staff to deal with every interest that every young gentleman in this University is—well, is interested in."

"You will notice," said Denton, "that we are already modelling our conversation upon terms of serious journalism. You, Ferrars, have been marked out for the hon-

our of being our musical critic. You will have an unrivalled opportunity of scoring off anybody in the musical world that you happen to have a down on, and part of your duties will be to report to me any musician who looks particularly silly when he's musicianing. You can rely upon me to make him look sillier still when he appears in the 'L. B.' By the by, Roger, we'll call it the 'L. B.' not the 'Light Blue.' Make a note of it, will you?"

"No, I won't," said Frere. "John Ferrars, can we rely upon you? You won't be paid for your contributions. Nobody will except Fred and me. But you can boost yourself as much as you want. 'When Mr. Ferrars got up to sing, a hurricane of applause swept the assembly, which developed into a blizzard when he sat down.' That sort of thing. You needn't sign your stuff."

"Nothing doing in the music line," said Ferrars; "but I'll do the rowing for you if you like."

"Parkins is going to do the rowing. In every department of sport we have secured the services of a wearer of the blue. Hence the name of our journal. Music or nothing, Ferrars."

"Tony Dare will do the music for you," said Ferrars. "He knows quite as much about it as I do."

"It isn't necessary that he should know anything about it," said Frere. "Fred, make a note. Dare for the music. Having arranged for that department we will now go and call upon the Senior Proctor and invite him to undertake the Police News. Our journal will not confine itself entirely to the pursuits of Cambridge University. The town of Cambridge will also be represented

in our columns. Fred, make a note. The Mayor for ladies' fashions. We will call on him at the Guildhall to-morrow."

The "L. B." duly made its appearance, and was kindly received. Its personal note was such that if it had been a London journal it would have produced a high average of libel actions per issue, but the most audacious flights of the Siamese Twins were greeted with most applause, and Denton's caricatures were so popular that he was able to demand a term's subscription from each of his victims.

Tony threw himself whole-heartedly into the enterprise. It provided just the stimulus that he wanted for his hitherto latent literary talent. He toiled greatly at first over his musical notes. He quite understood that the chief thing wanted was that they should be amusing, and in fact Frere blue-pencilled anything that he wrote about music that could be taken at all seriously. He managed to get a light touch into them, which came easy enough after a time, and went about with his eyes open for other subjects upon which to exercise his wit. He had a medium, and could do anything he liked with it. He developed a turn for light verse, and essayed his hand at little stories, some of which Frere said were tosh, but some of which he put in. For the third number he wrote the "leader," which was better than any that Frere had so far written. After that he did most of the writing. He was better at it than Frere, who was an editor born, but found the art of composition too arduous for him. The Siamese Twins took him into partnership. "I like to see other fellows working," said Frere.

"It's the great discovery Fred and I have made that you can get 'em to do it if you go the right way about it. But they won't do more than a certain amount unless you pay 'em for it, and we both hate paying anybody for anything. We were born like that and it's too late to alter now. But it won't hurt so much if you just take your share of the profits, if there are any. But ginger 'em up, Tony, ginger 'em up. Don't be afraid of offending 'em. They like being offended. Or if they don't, their pals do. It's the whole principle of good journalism. Go for Hubert, and he drops his subscription to the paper. Very well; but Clarence and Gregory and Alphonse buy six copies each, because they like seeing Hubert guyed. Next week guy Clarence, and Hubert comes back with his subscription and buys his six copies besides. Guy 'em good and proper, Tony. Don't leave 'em a shred. Make yourself a power in the land. You're young, but you've got it in you to go far. Now I'll sit and smoke while you get on with your leader. Consult me for anything you want. I shall only be reading a novel; you won't interrupt me."

Spring and early summer were consistently fine that year. Tony spent a good deal of his time in a Canadian canoe on the Backs. It was before the days of punts, but a Canadian canoe, well-cushioned, was a convenience for writing or reading. With Denton or Frere at the other end of it the work of the "L. B." went forward, mostly in the afternoons, but sometimes in the mornings, when the more serious section of undergraduate Cambridge was penned in lecture rooms, or reading privately indoors. The slow river moved on past lawns and gardens or

hemmed between ancient walls, the rooks cawed in lazy satisfaction, the whir of an occasional mowing-machine took away nothing from the brooding peace of the summer scene. It was always connected afterwards in Tony's mind with his first genuine efforts at writing, which seemed to be so easy a task in those days that all his ambitions to make it his business in life revived.

Frere, who had his serious side, though he kept it for the most part in abeyance, encouraged him. His father was what is known as a publicist, and had bought a weekly paper in which to express his views. Frere wasn't interested in his views, but he was interested in "The Plainspeaker." He was to be put in to manage it when he had finished with Cambridge, and his ideas of managing it would have caused his father some perturbation if he had prematurely disclosed them. "It's to be something just to keep me out of mischief," he told Tony, "and the idea is good as far it goes, for I should get into quite a lot of mischief if I hadn't something to do. As long as it pays its way and provides me with a few hundreds a year that's all the Governor wants. But it isn't all I want by any means. I'm going to make that old news-sheet hum, when I'm once safely in the saddle. I'm just trying my hand now. You shall come on to it too, Tony. And so shall Fred. We'll have a lot of fun together, and we'll make money too. I never seem to have quite enough of that commodity. My governor has, but he keeps such a lot of it to himself. Governors do, you know. I've yet to come across one who remembers how much more useful it would have been to him at our age, and acts accordingly."

"Peter Yardley's father does," said Tony.

"Perhaps he's an exception. But he overdoes it. Our Peter is making such a splash that he'll probably be asked to continue his studies elsewhere before long. I say, what do you think of taking a high line against the bloods in the 'L. B.'? They buy it more than any other class of the community, and we owe 'em a good turn."

"How do you mean, take a high line about them?"

"Oh, discover 'em, you know. 'It has come to our ears that there is a set of young men who enjoy all the privileges of this noble and learned University but fulfil none of the aims of its pious founders'—that sort of thing. 'We were hardly able to believe it, but made investigations on our behalf and now have the painful duty of placing the result of them before our readers.' We could publish interviews with them—make 'em all up, of course, but have it plain who was meant. We might begin with Hibbert. As he's a polo Blue he won't be altogether unknown to the hoi polloi, and it's always as well to keep your eye on them."

"But he does the polo for us."

"What does that matter? We'd get him to interview himself, only you'd do it much better. I'll tell you what, we'll discover St. Hugh's. 'We had often wondered what that group of buildings was next to the large grocer's shop in New Street.' That sort of thing. Don't you think you could make something of it?"

Tony thought that he could, but had some qualms which he did not impart to Frere. He didn't mind treating St. Hugh's in the way suggested. He could do it so as to increase the credit of his college. But he was not on

such terms with the out-and-out bloods, though he knew a few of them, as to be able to use the blandly impertinent touch which was the essence of this kind of journalism, and without which he couldn't make his effect. They would hardly take it from a freshman, who wasn't one of themselves. And he didn't really know enough about them personally. The intimate personal note was essential.

Fortunately Hibbert took an interest in the scheme. He seemed to be quite illiterate, but had a pretty journalistic wit. With Tony to put his bright ideas into shape he produced an interview with himself which caused some of his fellow-bloods without his sense of humour, but with the exaggerated idea of their own importance that infested the minds of the less admirable members of the fraternity, to ask him if he was going to stand that sort of thing. Hibbert professed to be extremely annoyed, and compiled an interview with the next on the list which put his own completely into the shade.

Now the fat was in the fire. Belton, the gentleman who had been assailed, was of the blatant variety of blood, noisy and swollen-headed. He had money, but nothing much else to recommend him. Undergraduate society is lenient enough, but there were some of his own associates who had very little use for Belton, and chuckled with delight at seeing him exposed. This, however, did not prevent them from egging him on to a strong protest against the "L. B." for the outrageous way in which they had made free with him.

He called upon the Siamese Twins and blustered hugely. They played with him beautifully. He could see, said Frere, that it was impossible for them to give

away the name of their contributor. All journalistic confidence would be at an end if editors once began that sort of thing. However much editors themselves might regret the tone of some of their own contributors, whose writings had not been sufficiently overlooked in the great press of work, they had to take full responsibility for everything that appeared in the paper. What was it that Mr. Belton particularly objected to in this article?

He told them, in language not altogether temperate, and Frere made careful notes, and promised him a handsome apology in the next number. He had not asked for this, and didn't particularly want it; he would rather have bashed somebody over the head, he explained. But they got rid of him and set to work immediately, while the echo of his strident voice was still in their ears. Tony, sitting in a corner of the room, had also been making mental notes. Belton didn't know him or anything about him, and had taken no notice of him during the stormy interview that had just passed.

The apology was almost as long as the original article. "We much regret," it began, "that through the inadvertence of our office boy, who was intoxicated, and is now doing time, we were led into publishing a series of statements in our interview with Mr. Billy Billingsgate of Wormwood Scrubs College, which Mr. William Belton of Trinity Hall considers applicable, or inapplicable—we forget which—to himself. We will say frankly that for a quiet reading man and chess player, interested in Foreign Missions, such as we understand Mr. Belton to be, to find himself attracting the sort of notice that our interview aroused must be painful in the extreme, and we

give the fullest possible contradiction to the erroneous statements which Mr. Belton says we made. It is only fair to him to do this in his own words, as far as we are able to reproduce them without following our office-boy into chokey.

" 'You know I mean to say,' said Mr. Belton of Trinity Hall, 'what I mean to say d—n it all you know is it's pretty thick, d—n it, to say a fellow's got hands like hams and then make it worse by saying you don't mean Wiltshire hams d—n it that sort of thing's got to stop and stop pretty quick d—n it or there's going to be trouble for somebody, what?"

This effort was much liked by the readers of the "L. B." the circulation of which went up because of it. Hibbert, who had been away from Cambridge for a few days, was delighted, and proposed that the interviews should always be apologized for in the following number. The protests were to be varied to fit the speech of the successive victims. He let it be known that he was running this particular feature of the paper, and as the bloods didn't mind being chaffed by one of their own number there were no further actual protests. Besides, Hibbert's chaff was innocuous. He was too good-natured to run the risk of hurting anybody's feelings, and would probably not have put the same amount of salt into the pseudo-apology to Belton if he had had a hand in it.

Tony got to know Hibbert very well during the latter half of the May term. He was a charming person, good-looking, high-spirited and of a very kindly nature. He was going into the City when he had finished with Cambridge, and Tony told him how much he would hate it.

But he didn't seem to think so. His family had been prominent in commerce and finance for generations. Most of them had had their fling before settling down to it, and there was none of them that hadn't settled down, so far as it was necessary to do so in order to make money. Although he looked upon his three years at Cambridge in no other way than having his fling, something peeped through from beneath it all that did not make it look so impossible that he should take to work when the time came. It was curious that it was from Hibbert, more than from Stephen, or from others who were striving to make use of their time, that Tony gained any idea of Cambridge as merely a temporary phase of life. It had come to be so much a place of desire for him that now he was in it and of it he hardly looked forward at all to what was to follow. Nor perhaps did Hibbert, being content to gather the pleasures of the day as they came to him. But when Tony had finished with Cambridge something would have gone out of his life that would never be replaced, while Hibbert would hardly cast back a look of regret.

By the end of his first year, Tony's status in his own college had altered. He had not made himself one of the bloods, being still somewhat bewildered at some of their habits and customs, and retaining some control over his expenditure, though it had come to be far in excess of anything that he had imagined, and his bills were piling up. But he was now more allied with them than with those with whom he had begun, and was following their example in assigning no very great importance to his membership of St. Hugh's. Always with the exception of

Stephen, he lived less and less with the men whose centre was the college, and more with his friends outside it. There was no doubt that he was enjoying life more than before; but it was quite a different life from the one he had looked forward to enjoying. He was sometimes inclined to look back with regret to his beginnings, when it had seemed such a tremendous fact accomplished to have the right to go about in cap and gown, and to write himself "Anthony Dare, St. Hugh's College, Cambridge."

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECOND YEAR

Tony and Stephen were sitting on the grassy bank of Byron's Pool. They had come for their last Sunday walk together. Stephen had finished his Cambridge course, with a hard-won Second, and Tony had two years of his behind him, upon which he was now looking back with feelings of no great satisfaction, though he had achieved something, almost without design, and with no particular effort, that he was half proud, half ashamed of.

What he had achieved was symbolized by the pink and white ribbon of the Athenæum Club round his straw hat. He was socially of the elect. In the common phrase, he "knew everybody," and the common phrase had this much truth in it that he could without difficulty have known anybody whom he wanted to know, of whatever kind of distinction in the undergraduate world. That he would have been considered of no account at all by the great mass of undergraduates, while the light blue ribbon round Stephen's hat would have drawn reverential glances everywhere, and he would have been recognized as Hawthorne of St. Hugh's by nearly everybody in the University and the town besides, made no difference. Tony had a dozen friends for every one of Stephen's, and the members of his own college formed but a small part of them.

Yet he envied Stephen as they sat and talked on this last afternoon that they would spend together in Cambridge. It was not because of his "blue," for Blues as Blues were of little account in the circle adorned by Tony, and it was not for what lay in front of him, to which he had not been able to accustom himself.

Stephen had decided a year before to take Orders, but he had only within the last few days told Tony that it was with the definite idea of work as a missionary. That wanted getting used to. What was fixed and sure about it was that Stephen was free of doubts, free of anxiety, with a clear purpose ahead of him to which he had come through years of unhurried preparation, in which he had wasted none of his time, none of his energy, and none of the moderate talents with which he had been endowed. Tony felt his own career so far to have been a poor thing besides that of his friend, though except in bodily strength his gifts were so much greater. Stephen had made good. He always would make good, whatever work he took up; and already he had the reward of his singleness of aim in an untroubled mind, while Tony's mind was full of troubles and uncertainties.

Stephen was telling him how his decision had been received at home. "Broadbent didn't like it a bit," he said, with his old grinning turn of the head. "I never would say definitely that I was going to take Orders, but I suppose when I went steadily on with the old Classical Trip he thought it was all right. I did say that I wouldn't be a schoolmaster, but when I got my blue I'm sure he thought it would all lead to a comfortable living by and by, and I hadn't done so badly after all for a

person who wasn't so terribly bright to begin with. Well, I haven't, have I, Tony?"

"No, dear old boy," said Tony. "I wish I'd done half as well."

"Well, it's different for you. My work had to lead to something. If I could have gone in for engineering I dare say I should have done much better. But I couldn't make up my mind to go in for it, for it would have meant cutting myself off from—from the other. Somehow I never wanted to do that, when it came to the point. I was a good deal worried about it a year ago. I had to make up my mind and yet I couldn't."

"What made you decide?"

"I hadn't decided when I came up again, but there was something that prevented my making any change. I seemed to see it then that I had to go on, and wait till I saw my way more clearly. So then I felt more at ease about it, and tackled the old Classical Trip with more keenness. In fact, I got to like it rather, though I didn't see what it was to lead to, except to a Degree. Anyhow, I was quite happy, and of course it was jolly to get my blue; and I had the rowing to think about. Until the Easter vac I don't think I puzzled my head at all about what I was going to do. I just left it. And though nothing came to me in the vac, by that time I knew that I should get light some time or other and only had to wait for it."

"Dear old Stephen! How did it come?"

"Of course you remember when the Bishop of Polynesia came to preach the Varsity sermon at the beginning of the term?"

"I remember your telling me about it. But you hadn't decided then to go out there."

"Yes, I had, if he would take me. I was so keen about it that I could hardly keep it to myself. You'd have got it out of me if you'd tried. But I didn't want to say anything until I was sure I shouldn't be turned down."

"Not much fear of your being turned down, old boy! I should think he jumped at you, didn't he?"

Stephen did not answer this question. "He's a splendid man," he said. "We've been writing to one another, and I'm going to see him in London next week. But it's all settled. He wanted to be sure that I should stick to it, for some years at least. He's had one or two men who have gone out and got tired of it. And he's had to be wary of people who want to go out just for the pleasure and excitement of it. There's a lot of sailing about among the islands, and of course I shall like that. But you know I *am* keen, Tony. Those islanders! He says it's wonderful what Christianity has done for them. He has given up his life to them; he has nearly lost it more than once, and the first bishop was killed. There's not much danger of that now, but—oh, it's a great work. I'm longing to get out there, but it won't be for another year yet."

There was a long silence as they lay in the cool grass, each of them busy with his thoughts, while the light summer breeze stirred the leaves above their heads and ruffled the surface of the quiet pool. Tony saw that there was more behind Stephen's purpose than he had thought. He had had his call, after waiting for it for so long in patience, and he would give the whole of himself, his body

trained to hardships, his strong undivided mind, and all his gifts of devotion and loyalty.

"Why isn't Broadbent pleased?" he asked presently.

Stephen laughed. "He'll get used to it," he said. "I'm not worrying myself about him. He's not a bad old thing."

"What do your mother and Ruth say?"

Stephen's face became a little shadowed. "Mother would rather I stayed at home," he said shortly. "Of course Ruth is on my side. Ruth always understands."

It seemed curious that Mrs. Broadbent should not also have been on Stephen's side in this matter, for surely Stephen's father would have been overjoyed at his decision! Even Tony saw that, wondered that she should so completely have transferred her allegiance. But Ruth always understood. Yes, Ruth, who couldn't remember her father, and was treated with tender affection by her step-father, would not be swayed from her loyalties. Stephen trusted her, and she was worthy of all his trust. Tony warmed towards the thought of her. "I wish I had a sister," he said. "I should like to tell her everything about myself."

Stephen turned his head quickly towards him. "You're unhappy about something, aren't you, Tony?" he asked. "What is it, old boy? We're as good friends as ever, aren't we? though we don't live the same sort of life up here."

"My life has been a pretty rotten thing compared to yours," Tony said. "I thought I should have enjoyed every moment of my time here. I dare say I should have if I had taken it as you have. But I've gone in for

enjoying myself, and I'm beginning to find out that that isn't—well, it isn't the way to enjoy yourself. Black care sticks to your shoulders. I wish I'd done with it."

"Is it debt?" Stephen asked.

"Yes, that's the chief trouble. I don't know that I've been particularly extravagant—not nearly so much as some; but I suppose I've spent about twice as much as I've had, and now I'm beginning to feel it. I shall go down with most of my bills unpaid, so as to have *some*thing to spend in the vac, and it won't be a very happy return, as far as I can see."

"Why don't you tell Henry?"

"I dare say I shall make up my mind to tell Henry. It's the easy way. Henry has plenty of money. I expect he'll pay up for me all right, when he's made enough fuss about it. I shall hate telling him, but I shall hate still more being dunned during my last year."

Stephen was not at home with irony, of however mild a nature. "That's not quite the way to look at it, is it?" he said. "Of course it will be beastly to tell him, but if you make up your mind that it won't happen again!"

"But it will happen again. I've got into a certain way of living up here, and it costs more than my allowance. I might spend a bit less, but unless I chucked everything that makes life worth living here I couldn't do on what I have, even if I got a fresh start. Those are the salient facts of the situation, and I may as well face them. The only thing I could do would be to go down; and I don't want to do that either."

"No, you ought not to go down. But surely, Tony,

you've got strength of mind enough to pull up, if you see you're going wrong. You came up here for a certain purpose. If you put that first—!"

"I came up here to read Law. I'm reading enough Law for all practical purposes. I know I've developed into rather a rotter, unexpectedly to myself, but I haven't lost my head entirely. I shan't get ploughed. I shall take my degree, and then I shall be ready to read for a year in somebody's Chambers, and get called to the Bar at the end of it. It won't be a bad thing to be called to the Bar, but I don't suppose I shall practise. I'm going to write. I've made up my mind to that at any rate. I'm writing now, and making a little money by it too, but not very much—not enough to make up the difference between what Henry gives me and what I spend."

"You've always said you were going to be a writer, haven't you?"

"Yes. It's the one thing in all my vagaries that I've never quite lost hold of. The odd thing is that I've written so little. I've had a lot of practice with the 'L. B.,' and it has taught me a good deal. But I don't seem to be able to do anything else much. I've had a try at some of the magazines, but they always send my stuff back. Some of them say they like it, but they send it back all the same. Frere says he'll give me something to do when he takes hold of the 'Plainspeaker,' but that won't be until he's had his fling this summer. Still, if he can put work in my way by the time I come up here again, I may make up the deficiency. I think I shall hang on, and not tell Henry after all. He has been a good brother to me, and I hate disturbing him."

Nevertheless, Tony did tell Henry about his debts very soon after he got home.

Henry had changed. Tony noticed it from the first day, and wondered whether anything had happened between him and Laura to make him so quiet and subdued, and so much more expressive in his pleasure at having Tony with him again. Laura seemed more cold and aloof than ever. She ordered her household as competently as before, but took scarcely any interest in her home, or in her husband. She greeted Tony kindly enough, but didn't seem to take much interest in him either, and he found it difficult to understand her. She had given up her airs of religious superiority, which was so far an improvement, but it seemed to be only because she had withdrawn herself from any sympathy with Henry's point of view, and now only wanted to go her own way. She would sit almost silent at mealtimes, while Henry and Tony talked. Henry would sometimes try to bring her into the conversation. It touched Tony to see him returning to that indulgent affection with her which had been his note in the old days, when she had been "difficult." He seemed to want to make contact with her; but she was entirely irresponsive. Tony relinquished the idea of there having been any "upset" between them, but it was plain that Henry's home life, however great may have been his success outside, had come to be one of loneliness and lack of sympathy. He must have seen that it could hardly go on in that way much longer, or there would be nothing of it left for him at all, and was trying to get back to the terms upon which he and his wife had lived contentedly for many years of married life.

But he would not talk to Tony about Laura. Nor did he talk to him much about his work in the City, though he told him enough to assure him that he was doing all that he could have expected to do there. He seemed to want to get away from his daily life altogether, and couldn't hear enough of what Tony was doing at Cambridge. He had never once been to see him there. Tony had asked him and Laura together, more than once, but Laura had always made excuses. Now he thought that if he had asked Henry alone he would have come, and he was sorry that he hadn't done so. But next term! Yes; Henry said that he should like to come. Laura wouldn't mind being left alone for a Sunday. In fact he didn't see much of her on Sundays, for she was at St. Cyprian's most of the day. But he didn't seem eager to make plans; it was his pleasure to have Tony there with him now. He hoped that he wouldn't be going away too much during the early part of the vacation. Later on perhaps they might go abroad together.

Tony had made many plans for the vacation, but Henry's new-found dependence on him moved him to a sudden decision to let everything slide for the sake of keeping him company. Even as he made it he knew that it would be difficult to keep, and he refrained from clinching it by a promise. But his heart was tender towards his brother; at least he would not act without thought of him.

The confession of debt came out easily enough. It was obvious from his account of his doings that he could not have kept within his allowance, or anything like it. Henry asked him the question simply, and with no hint of cen-

sure. "Have you got many debts that you can't meet?"

Tony told him everything, surprised at himself for the way in which he did it, as if it were another person he was talking about. They were sitting in the garden together after dinner, by the tennis lawn, which had not been played on during the summer. Laura had gone out before they had left the dining-room. There was a strong sense of companionship as they sat and smoked and talked on a garden bench in the serene light of the summer evening, with nothing to disturb them.

Henry took it all so calmly that Tony had half an idea that he would offer to pay all his debts and say no more about it. But he did not refer to his debts for some time. He seemed to be in a reflective philosophical mood, to which the subject of debt did not belong. "Both of us have got a long way from what we were brought up to," he said. "Father made a success of his business up to a certain point, but I've done more in three years than he did in thirty. You had a rich home, far beyond anything that he was brought up to, but you've taken your own opportunities to get in with the sort of people that he could never have known."

Tony didn't quite like this way of putting it. "It has just happened like that," he said. "I haven't gone out of my way. But of course it's more interesting to be in the swim."

"Oh, yes. It's the same with me in another way. But I haven't your social gifts. With the position I have made for myself I might touch life at many more points than I do. But I don't care about it; it's too late. Still, there's a difference between us, you know, Tony. Any-

thing that I might do outside of business would come as a result of what I've done in it. You've got to establish yourself first."

"Yes, I know," said Tony, with contrition. "I'm afraid there's very little excuse for me."

"Well, I'm not sure of that. Perhaps it's better not to make excuses for yourself, but others can make them for you. You've given yourself over to the current, but you haven't committed any serious follies. Still, you won't do much in life if you can't resist the current sometimes. You'll have your own way to make in the world. You'll have to cut your coat according to your cloth sooner or later, and you ought to be doing it now. I gave you what I thought was a handsome allowance. I'm willing to increase it, but not to the extent to which you've been spending. Look here, if I pay your debts and give you three hundred for your last year, will you do on that?"

"Oh, yes, I will, Henry. It's most awfully good of you. Yes, I *will* do on it, and I won't get into debt again. I do promise you that. I didn't think you would do anything like that for me."

"Well, my dear boy, I want to do everything I can for you; but I don't want to relieve you of the responsibility of looking after yourself. Three hundred a year won't cover the way in which you have been living. You'll have to exercise some restraint; but it will be easier for you."

"I'll chuck the Athenæum. I don't really belong to the bloods, though there are lots of them I like. I ought not to have joined, but I was flattered when they asked me. I won't give so many dinners. I'll be careful, Henry.

Really I will. You *are* good in the way you have taken it."

"There's just one thing, Tony. You put your debts at three hundred. They're probably nearer four. There's always more than one thinks, when you come to add it up. I'll give you that now; but it must come off anything I shall leave you in my will. I've made my arrangements, and it wouldn't be fair to Laura to alter them."

Tony accepted this, rather surprised that it should have been mentioned. But he knew how precise Henry was in money matters. Probably he had put down an exact sum for Tony's further education and didn't want to alter it, though three or four hundred pounds couldn't make much difference to him, considering his income and expenditure.

But what a relief it was to be cleared of his troubles! The very ease with which it had come about made him bethink himself. He had told Stephen that even if his debts were paid he shouldn't be able to avoid getting into debt again. But Henry had so generously increased his allowance as well as paying his debts. It would be base ingratitude to go beyond that, and he was determined not to do it. He saw himself living a more retired life at Cambridge, and the prospect was not without its allure. His position was secure enough. With all his over-expenditure, he had not attained to it by extravagance of entertainment, as some others whom he knew had done. He was generally liked, but his chief friends were among the quieter men of the embracing set to which he belonged. Many of these kept well within the allowance which would now be his, and nobody thought the less of

them for it. In his third year he would withdraw himself from all but the cream of his society, and he would be still more considered as a man of parts, whose friendship was not open to everybody.

It was part of his make-up to indulge such fancies as these, but they were not the chief of his imaginings. He had accepted Henry's warning that he would have to make his own way in the world. Henry's kindness had brought it home to him as nothing else had or perhaps would have done. It was certainly time that he began to think seriously about the work that he would have to do, and to prepare for it. It would not be work at the Bar. He was doubtful whether it would even be worth while spending the extra year in getting called. It would be best to take his degree in Law, as he had gone so far with it, but he ought to be spending his last year, and especially the months of the Long Vacation, stretching in front of him, in writing diligently, something that would stand him in stead by and by, and not leave him everything to do when he had finished with Cambridge. He would begin the novel which he had for years intended to write, but of which he had as yet written no word, nor even planned a subject. When he left Cambridge he would get into journalism of some kind, as everybody seemed to do who started on a career of authorship. But the more successful he might be in that the less time he would have for the higher flights of fiction. He had a whole year before him now in which such a work would be a delight, and give interest and point to his days. He must start it at once. The time had gone by to think about it idly as something for the future, and to do nothing.

He would have liked to go to some pleasant place abroad, now almost at once, and set to work, while the early summer was making all beautiful places still more beautiful; but he must stay by Henry. Whatever latitude he might allow himself later on, he could not forsake him now. Henry wanted him. He had spent most of his life in pleasing himself, but his affection and loyalty were aroused now. He could think and act for another, and gain satisfaction in doing so.

Henry wanted rousing out of himself. When he was at home he read, and that was about all that he did. He had not taken the trouble to mark out the tennis court, and Tony found that he had not once been to Mrs. Clitheroe's weekly gatherings, to which he himself resorted on the first occasion. Laura had given up "all that sort of thing" definitely. She told Tony so when he tackled her about it. There was so much to do among the poor, she said, that she had decided not to spend any of the time that she could give up to her work in going here and there just for pleasure. She had been much happier since she had made this decision, for she had learnt that if you gave yourself up heart and soul to helping others the reward was far greater than if you allowed your own inclinations to guide you.

"That's all very well for you, Laura," said the somewhat indignant Tony. "But what about Henry?"

"There's nothing to prevent Henry going to Mrs. Clitheroe's if he wants to," she said. "Perhaps that *sounds* selfish, but for anything like that he doesn't want me with him. I do go out with him sometimes in the evening, when he couldn't very well accept invitations by

himself; but really he doesn't care to go out much now. He is happier at home by himself reading, when I'm not with him."

"Happier!" exclaimed Tony. "A lot of happiness he gets now, poor old Henry! Look here, Laura, you once attacked me, when I was at school, for going out and leaving father too much to himself. Let me return the compliment. You leave Henry to himself now much more than I ever did father."

"My dear Tony, you mustn't talk to me like that. Henry and I understand one another perfectly, and in any case I don't owe you an account of my actions."

"Oh, if you're going to talk like that!" said Tony. "But I will say this, that you're a different person altogether from what you were when you and Henry first came to Hilbury."

"I hope I am," said Laura.

CHAPTER XXIII

LAUSANNE

Henry went to St. Leonards with Tony for a few days about a week later. Laura made no objection, but said that his going away made it easier to ask if he would mind her going to the Settlement for a month to take the place of the Matron, who had been given a holiday. She would rather take her own holiday in that way, and spend the money that would be saved by her not going abroad on her poor people. If Henry wanted her, of course she would come with him, but he had mentioned going off with Tony, and if he liked to do that then they would all be doing what they wanted to do.

Henry assented to this arrangement, with an eagerness that struck Tony almost as a slight upon Laura. But she did not take it in that way. She was evidently set upon her own plan, and if she could carry it out without failing in what she conceived to be her duty, that was all she cared about. "You see," she said to Tony, "that Henry doesn't really want me as long as he can have you for a companion. We are together all the year round, and it is a good thing for us to be apart for a little sometimes, especially when there is something that each of us wants to do. I'm sure Henry wants a change, and he ought to stay abroad for as long as it amuses him. You need not bother about me. I shall shut up the house and

put the servants on board wages. I can live at the Settlement for as long as I want to. It will do *me* good too to have a complete change, and to feel that I am making myself of use."

There seemed to be no second thought behind all this. Tony had heard from Mrs. Clitheroe that there were few women who had taken up work at this East End Settlement who spent themselves over it so whole-heartedly as Laura did. But for her failure in sympathy at home it might have been said that she had found her life's work and was growing in virtue by practising it. Some months before she would certainly have made a grievance of Henry leaving her to go off with Tony, even though his doing so left her free to do something that she wanted to do. She was a baffling problem, but Tony was glad enough to get rid of her, and there was nothing in Henry's attitude to show that he was otherwise than pleased at the prospect of going off with Tony alone.

The few days' visit to St. Leonards might have been given up, for Henry seemed anxious to go to Switzerland as soon as possible, but Tony wanted to see his aunt before he left England, and they started their holiday there, not to return to Hilbury before they made the longer journey.

Henry and Miss Barrett had always been good friends, though they had seen little of each other for the last few years, but Tony had some doubts about Aunt Charlotte's reception of his brother. She had always seemed to hug a prejudice against him. Of Laura she could never say a good word, and she did not treat Henry's name when it was mentioned with like hostility; but there was no doubt

that she much preferred Tony, who was not her nephew, to Henry who was, and Tony hoped that she would not make this too apparent.

They went to see her on the first morning after their arrival. Henry took a carriage. His leg was giving him some trouble, he said, and he didn't want to walk all that distance in the heat, and up the hill. It was only then that it came to Tony that he had been walking lamer than before, but Henry impatiently turned aside his enquiries. "There's just a little rheumatism or something," he said. "I've had it before."

Aunt Charlotte was sitting in her parlour reading a novel from the library. She never seemed to have any household duties to perform except a little "ordering." She was either out or about or else amusing herself at home. She was flustered at Henry's arrival, but it seemed to Tony that she was also flattered, and made haste to produce her usual welcome of wine and cake, with even more than her usual flow of conversation. Henry was pleasant and friendly with her, and Tony could see the slight restraint with which she had received him melting rapidly. By the time she had installed him in the easy chair opposite to her own and supplied him with nutriment she was evidently ready to respond to whatever warmth he might produce towards her with a like warmth on her side. She might even have been expected to ask kindly after Laura if she were given the opening. Her rancours were not such as to withstand human contact.

Presently she surprised Tony by saying in her sharp sudden way: "But how ill you are looking, Henry! Indeed, and I think you do want a holiday, and I'm only

sorry that you should be taking it in a foreign country, far away from good medical advice."

Henry laughed, and said that he wasn't ill at all, but only a little run down. As for doctors, he said, there were the best doctors in the world at Lausanne, where they were going first of all.

Aunt Charlotte nodded her foolish-wise old head. "Well, I hope it may be so," she said. "But I'm quite sure there are no nurses worth speaking about. Now if you want a nurse, Henry, you send for me. I shall give up everything and come out to you. You're my own kith and kin, and about the only one left in the world now that is. I've made a great deal of Tony, and I love him very dearly, and I haven't had such chances with you, or I dare say I should have loved you too. You're my dear sister Minnie's own son, and the truth of the matter is when I look at you I can't resist you. I'm very foolish, I dare say, but I was made like that, and the fact is that you ought not to be travelling outside your own comfortable country with only a boy like Tony to take care of you—a dear boy, as I have always said and always shall say, but *not* a woman, say what you will of him."

The ready tears stood in Aunt Charlotte's sharp eyes, but her last sentence allowed them to take leave of her on a note of laughter, which did not lighten the sudden sense of fright that had come to Tony, and clung to him as he walked with Henry down the steep narrow pavement. "Why are we going to Lausanne, Henry?" he asked. "Are you ill? Is your leg bad? Oh, do tell me, if there's anything!"

Then Henry told him, in a matter of fact voice, as

they walked slowly among the press of people, any one of whom could have heard everything he said, if they had cared to linger and listen.

"I didn't want to frighten you," he said; "but there's a specialist in Lausanne whom I want to consult. I don't want Laura to know of it. Cookson has been treating me, but he thinks there may be trouble that will need an operation. I hope it may not be so, but—well, I've got to face it. I've made all my arrangements. I don't mind so much now I shall have you with me."

This last sentence moved Tony profoundly. What had he ever been to Henry that his very presence at a time of trouble mattered so much to him? But what did he mean by saying that he had made all his arrangements? The sudden memory came to him of that curious stipulation about the money that Henry was giving him. He had said then that he had made his arrangements—the arrangements for his will.

"What operation, Henry?" he asked. "There won't be any danger will there? Oh, do tell me everything. If I'm to be any use to you, Henry—and I will try to be—I ought to know everything."

They were in the crowd by the fish-market. In after years Tony never passed by there without the scene coming vividly before him, Henry and he walking rather slowly, Henry with his now pronounced limp, talking in low even voices, while the indifferent holiday crowd almost jostled them. But at the time he saw nothing of it consciously. He was shut off from the rest of the world with his brother, for whom he felt something that had nothing to do with the closer friendship that had come about be-

tween them, but went deeper, deeper than any emotion he had ever felt, except over his father's death five years before.

Henry hesitated. "I'd rather not say anything more about it now," he said. "Let's wait till we get to Lausanne. I shouldn't have said anything to you at all, but for what Aunt Charlotte said. And don't think too much about it, Tony. If I had thought that it was more likely to be serious than not, of course I should have told Laura, and she would have come with us. But naturally she would have been frightened; she'd have been bound to imagine the worst. I—I—well, Tony, I don't want to get frightened myself, and Cookson says there's no need to be. The worst that can happen—"

He broke off. "What is the worst that can happen? Do tell me everything, Henry."

They were by the Baths now, and sat down on one of the seats facing the sea. "I hadn't meant to tell you that," Henry said. "But if you see everything as I do, it will be going through it together, in a way. I shall be relying on you a lot, Tony, for I'm not a very brave fellow. Well, it means having my leg off—at the knee, Cookson said. I'm not sure that he doesn't expect that, though he wouldn't say so." He gave a deep sigh. "Well," he said with a smile, though his face was white, "at any rate I shan't be lame any longer. There's a man I know in the City with a cork leg, and I hadn't an idea of it till the other day, though I've known him for years."

Poor old Henry! It was true that he wasn't very brave. Tony knew it, as one does know such things about people with whom one has been in close contact. He must

already have gone through dreadful times, lying awake at night picturing what might come to him, making the worst of it, sweating with fear. But he had kept it to himself, as he hadn't kept lesser aches and pains by which he had been attacked, and was building up a store of fortitude.

Tony lay awake that night himself, calling up his resolution to meet anything that might happen, and anxiously enquiring of himself how best he might give Henry that support for which he had shown so pathetically that he relied upon him. They had not spoken again on the subject that filled his mind, and it was clear to him that one way in which he could help Henry was to keep his mind off it as much as possible. Henry had been cheerful for the rest of the day, and seemed even to be enjoying the beginning of what was ostensibly to be a holiday. He gave Miss Barrett that impression, and Tony saw that she was pleased with Henry, finding him simpler and more sympathetic than she had thought, and certainly more fraternal in his treatment of Tony than Tony himself had ever indicated. Tony's senses were acutely set to catch these impressions. He saw Henry himself in a new light. If he hadn't the courage of men more robust, and shrank from the thought of pain, he had acquired some of the finer courage which hides up fear and goes with a calm air to meet danger. There was nothing that could have given Aunt Bertha any inkling of what lay behind the quiet cheerful talk of the evening, but Tony made up his mind that he would tell her. Henry had extracted no promise from him. She was the only person he would tell, and that because he

so ardently desired not to fail in any way, and her calm wise spirit would put strength into him; and she would show him the way.

She was shocked, but not entirely surprised. She too had noticed that Henry was looking ill, and his increased lameness had set her mind working. "I think I should have suspected something after you had gone," she said. "I do happen to know something about the surgeons in Lausanne, and I might have put two and two together. I'm glad you told me, Tony, but it's better that Henry shouldn't know that you have. I'm sure the best way is to be just as bright and cheerful as you can, until you know the decision. That is evidently what he expects from you, and what he wants to keep him up, poor fellow. He's wonderfully brave. Oh, I hope he won't have to go through it, but if it must be I'm so glad that he'll have you with him, Tony. You'll keep him up. And afterwards it won't be so bad."

It comforted Tony that she also felt that he could be a support, but the gratification of finding himself looked upon in that light only made him the more anxious not to fail, for a minute, or in the slightest degree. "Oh, I'll do my best," he said. "But is there anything to fear beyond the operation?" He told her something of what Henry had said about making his will.

She did not give him the easy assurance which would have meant nothing. "I can't tell," she said. "Such an operation would always be a shock. But you mustn't meet trouble half way. Laura knows nothing, does she?"

"No. And Henry said that if it were certain even that the operation would have to be performed he would

have asked her to go. That's one comfort. But I'm glad she won't be there. I don't know whether Henry will send for her if they do decide to operate. I shan't ask him. I don't believe she would be much good. She's grown so hard. I don't believe she cares for him a bit."

But Aunt Bertha rebuked this speech, though he knew that she didn't like Laura. "You must send for her," she said decidedly. "It would be cruel to run *any* risk."

But there was no time to send for Laura. Henry suffered considerable pain as they travelled, and saw the great surgeon on the afternoon of their arrival in Lausanne. Tony sent Dr. Cookson a wire to say that an immediate operation had been decided upon, and a few hours later one to Laura to say that it had been successfully performed. There was no occasion for anxiety, but Henry wanted her to come as soon as she could.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE END

The summer passed like a dream, which began with terror, moved on to relief and quietness, and then passed into ever increasing darkness and trouble. The figures of Laura, of Aunt Bertha, of Fred Hopwood, and of Laura again, seemed shadowy. Except for the short time in which the danger seemed to be removed, when Henry had rallied from the operation and began to move about on crutches, and Tony had left him for a fortnight, the realities had centred round the two of them alone. Tony's own life was in abeyance. The thought of Henry was with him night and day, and if his own affairs came to him unbidden it was as if from some time and place outside himself, and he pushed them aside as of no matter just now.

The reaction began to affect him when danger seemed to be at an end. It was then that Aunt Bertha came over, and took him away with her, which seemed to be the best thing she could do at the time. Their pleasant little trip, to Brienz and Lucerne, restored him to himself. By and by he and Henry would move about together, and get away from that hot city by the lake, which was like a nightmare of oppression to him. The optimism of his youth made headway. He could not remember afterwards that he had had any fears during that free time, and Aunt Bertha encouraged him to the

enjoyment she felt herself in scenes so new to her. They returned to Lausanne and she went home again, leaving Tony with Henry and Laura.

This was the most difficult time, though not the saddest. Henry, who had been the most docile and uncomplaining of patients, had become querulous and exacting. Laura had stayed with him night and day, when he was going through the worst, and proved herself an attentive and reliable nurse; but now she seemed almost to have lost interest in him, at least as a patient. She left more to the professional nurses, and had reverted to the self-contained silent mood which had been so frequent with her at home of late. It was just as difficult for Tony to create the atmosphere of sympathy between the three of them as if no crisis had come to affect their relationship, but this was what he set himself earnestly to do, and both of them came to rely upon him for whatever alleviations were possible for them. Presently Laura went home. She was to come out again when Henry was ready to travel, which they hoped would be in a few weeks' time.

When she had gone Tony received a second shock, as great as the first, except that now he was more tuned to bear it. The Swiss surgeon told him, with almost brutal directness, that Henry couldn't recover. "It is a question of a few months at the most," he said. "If I had had him before—perhaps, yes. But this sarcoma, it is a terrible thing. His English doctor should be shot—yes, shot, for his ignorance. But I shall say nothing about that. I do not wish to make trouble. I have enough trouble of my own with my patients. Now it is

you, young man, who must take the responsibilities. I have observed you, and you are sympathetic and are not thinking about yourself all the time. He is better when you are with him, and not his wife. You must keep his wife away from him as long as you can. She is terrible, that woman, with her piety of such a coldness. When it comes near the end she must be here, I know, but then —we shall be able to arrange it for him then, that he is not bothered."

"You mean that I mustn't tell her that—that he can't live."

"Yes, that is what I mean. I will help you. It must be very quick, in any event. It will only be for a few weeks, and she need not know what I have told you. I shall not tell her, if you don't, that we have known it already. After your English doctor, that will be a small matter."

"Might not another operation save him?"

"I am not going to perform another operation. I will not torture my patients for nothing. I am a man big enough to stand the brunts."

He spoke almost with violence. He was a big man physically, abounding in vitality. Tony had not liked him at first, but he knew now that his brusqueness and directness were the covering of a heart all tenderness toward suffering. He did not realize until long afterwards that a further operation might put off the end for a short time at the cost of greatly increased suffering, and that he was being spared the heavy responsibility of declining it. He was stunned by the revelation made to him; but once again trust had been shown to-

wards him, and he strung himself up to renewed endeavour.

The month that followed had more of a dream-like quality than any other part of his ordeal. The heat was stifling down by the lake, and Henry was counting upon being moved up to the freshness of the mountain pastures when he was well enough. But for the present he was resigned to making no effort, and lay in bed in his bright clean room in the clinic, almost contented. Tony was with him for as many hours of the day as was permitted, and dreaded the times in which he had to be alone. For when he was with Henry it was easy to keep up the illusion of convalescence. They played "Halma" together and read, with little spurts of talk in between. Their talk was natural enough, but gradually Henry became more silent, and more openly affectionate in his way of treating his young brother. Then Tony knew that his mind was beginning to move towards the truth.

One morning he walked up from his hotel at Ouchy to the clinic rather later than his usual time. He had slept little. The heat and the suspense were beginning to tell upon him, and he was wondering how long it would be before this phase of make-believe was over. It was doubtful now whether Henry was benefited by it, and the strain on Tony was such that he doubted whether he would be able to keep it up much longer.

Henry greeted him more cheerfully than for some days past. "You're late, old boy," he said. "I've been wanting you." He took his hand and smiled into his eyes. Tony knew that he loved him, that all the irritations and jealousies of past years were wiped out, that Henry

saw him as the little brother of whom he had been so fond and proud in his childhood.

Tony's overwrought nerves gave way. He burst into tears, but pulled himself up with a mighty effort, scarlet with shame at his lack of self-control. But Henry said: "Never mind, old boy. There's nothing to keep back any longer. I know."

Then Tony gave vent to his grief, which was curiously mixed with relief, crying softly and quietly as if he had been a child again, but found his tongue too, to answer Henry, who talked to him, holding his hand as he sat by the bed.

"It came to me in the night that it must be so," he said, "and this morning I asked Bertrand. He said I should have a few weeks longer, and there won't be much pain—not so much as there has been, and none at the last. I'm not sorry, you know, Tony, if it's to be like that. I've always dreaded what life was to be, and after all, I've had all that I could have expected out of it. No, I'm not sorry; I think I'm even glad. There's a sense of peace—nothing to struggle for any longer. Let's enjoy the time we shall have together. You've done so much for me, old boy. You'll have that to remember when I'm gone."

Poor Tony couldn't subdue his wretchedness that day, but having no longer to play a part relief of mind came to him gradually, and the days he spent with Henry were not very different from those that had gone before. Henry wrote to Laura himself, and also to Fred Hopwood, who brought her over two days later.

Fred's companionship was a comfort to Tony, for the

short time that he was able to stay. He had never shown himself more skilled in affairs than by the way in which he put Henry's mind at rest about the settlements that he wanted made, getting it all through quickly and thoroughly, and leaving behind him the confidence that all Henry's wishes would be carried out. Everything was arranged in one short interview, and there was a day to spare while papers were being prepared. Henry pressed Tony to go for some excursion with Fred, and though he didn't want to leave him for a day, he was glad afterwards that he had done so, for Fred put new courage into him for the last ordeal.

They went down the lake in a steamship and up the mountain railways to the summit of the Rocher de Naye, and there they sat and talked, among the rocks jewelled with Alpine flowers, in the clear fresh air, with all the wonderful panorama of the snow-peaks within their view. The beauty of the scene, as much as Fred's brotherly kindness, soothed Tony's spirit, and strengthened him to face what was to come.

"There's one thing that Henry wanted me to tell you," Fred said to him. "He made a codicil to his will, and left you rather more than he had thought he would be able to. Not very much, I'm afraid—well, I don't know why I shouldn't tell you the sum! it's two thousand pounds. It won't provide you with an income, but it will help you over the time in which you're working up to something. He doesn't want anything said about it. He knows now that he can leave all his affairs in my hands, and he doesn't want to think about money any more."

The announcement scarcely interested Tony, except

as a token of Henry's feeling for him. "He has been awfully good to me," he said.

"Well, Tony, you've been very good to him too," said Fred warmly. "It's a great ordeal, this waiting for the end. I've seen something of it. You love a person, and you know when he's gone you'll feel it badly, but there seems to be a sort of blight of indifference over you while you're waiting. It's that that you seemed to have escaped. You've shown great devotion. Poor old Henry feels it deeply, I know, and he thinks a lot about your future. I should talk to him about it, if I were you. He sees things clearly enough. He accepts it that you have what's called the artistic temperament, which means that you probably wouldn't do much at a profession, or in business, which you've tried already. But whatever you do, you must put all you can into it, for you'll be on your own entirely now. He's a little anxious about that. But you've shown lately that you can throw yourself whole-heartedly into something that's worth doing for its own sake. Tell him about your plans, if you've formed any. It will be good for him, and good for you too."

There wasn't much time, after Fred had left, to talk over anything. Henry grew rapidly worse, and Laura did not often leave Tony alone with him. She gave him the assiduous attention that she had given immediately after the operation. She was as reliable and self-contained as she had been then, but there was a subtle change in her which seemed to show her bewildered at what had come upon her. Henry was certainly more at his ease with her, but so far as Tony could tell there was no community of spirit between them, even at this time.

Probably there never had been: they had jogged on together comfortably enough until the change of fortune had come to them, and their companionship now wore much the same aspect as in the earlier days. It was with a sense of unreality that Tony heard them discussing surface matters together just as if the imminent shadow were not lying across their path. What Laura was thinking was completely hidden from him. He was hardly ever alone with her, and when he was she talked to him much in the same way as she did to Henry, and never mentioned the future.

But when Henry began to get worse, which he did very rapidly, Tony saw that she had been waiting for something. Was it to talk to him about religion, which she had not yet been able to make up her mind to do? Dr. Bertrand thought so, and seemed determined to prevent it. Knowing what he thought about her, Tony was surprised at the sympathetic way in which he entered into what she might be supposed to be feeling. He commended her for her quietness. It was the one thing she could do to ease the last days—not to let her husband worry about anything, to surround him as far as possible with the normal atmosphere of life, not to set his brain working.

She received this in tight-lipped silence, and Tony knew, and probably Dr. Bertrand too, that it made no difference to her intention, whatever it may have been. But very soon after he had spoken he began to give Henry opiates. The disease was making rapid strides, and the pain would have been great without them.

They slid very quickly from the time of ordinary talk

to the time in which Henry lay for hour after hour without speaking, and from that until the time when it became plain that he would never speak consciously to them again. Tony could never remember afterwards when the last words of full knowledge had been spoken between them. There had been none in the nature of a farewell, either to Laura or to him. Henry lingered for some days in a state of unconsciousness, and slipped away from life at a moment that could hardly be perceived.

Tony had a little glimpse of the real Laura as they travelled to England together a week later. He had looked after her, and taken all the trouble that he could off her shoulders. He couldn't tell how deeply she was feeling Henry's death. To outward appearance she felt it little, and he never saw her shed a tear. But he knew that something was going on in her mind, and rather dreaded the revelation of it.

They made the night journey from Lausanne, and did not engage sleepers. They had a carriage to themselves, and dozed through the night, but when dawn had come they were wakeful, and fell into talk.

After a little pause, she said, sitting bolt upright and looking out of the window on to the woods and fields white with the morning mist: "I never talked to Henry about what I believe in. Dr. Bertrand tricked me, and I was very angry when I knew it. But now I don't mind. I believe I wasn't meant to."

"Why not, Laura?" Tony asked her, surprised at what she had said.

"Because I don't think I was the person to do it. I

never had much influence with Henry, in anything that really mattered, and it might have come between us at the last. There is much that I have to regret in my life with him, especially during the last few years. But at the end we were together. I don't think we should have come together again if he had lived, though I should have tried more. Now I am happy about him. And I am happier about myself too. I am of use in the life I have been living lately, and am going to live. I wasn't much use to him."

Tony felt intense discomfort. There was no softening in her manner, though she was accusing herself. He didn't know what she wanted from him.

"I suppose we all take ourselves to task when somebody we love has gone," he said, awkwardly. "I know I do—for what I used to be towards Henry. But I did love him, all the same."

The tears came into his eyes, though Laura showed so little emotion. He was feeling tired and bruised. His own life was before him again, with more opportunity for enjoying it than he had had before. He had reminded himself of this, telling himself that with the money Henry had left him his path would be pleasant enough in the immediate future. But he had felt no pleasure of anticipation. The thought of Henry was always with him, and Henry had gone out of his life, leaving an emptiness. He knew that in time he would get over it, as he had got over the shock and grief of his father's death five years before. But the time was not yet.

"I don't think you need reproach yourself," Laura said, in the same even voice. "None of the three of us

got on very well together in the old days; but that's long since over. You helped us in our home life and Henry missed you very much when you went to Cambridge. After he was taken ill you were more to him than anybody. He wanted you more than he did me. It was my fault that it was so, perhaps, but at any rate you have nothing to reproach yourself with. And it has done you good too. I don't know that you were ever more selfish than one expects a young man to be, but there has been no selfishness in you lately. I don't suppose we shall see very much of each other for the future, though I hope we shan't drift apart altogether; but I shall always remember what you were to Henry at the last. I think it has made a man of you. You will get over the trouble, but I hope you will never lose the spirit that it has put into you. Henry was sometimes afraid for your future, but at the last I know he thought you wouldn't fail."

THE END

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